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*Horror in Culture & Entertainment*

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AN INTERVIEW WITH  
WILLIAM PETER BLATTY

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## Horror in Culture & Entertainment

# RUE MORCUE

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The top grossing horror film of all time is being re-released to theatres in the fall, in a way you have never seen it before. Author William Peter Blatty looks back on the phenomenon he created.  
By Rod Guldin

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# NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

#16

One of the things that always annoyed me about magazines — especially genre magazines — was that they read like press kits. They seemed less interested in informing their readers about the latest movie than in convincing them that it was worth their hard-earned money. It always seemed that hyping up the latest film or book was part and parcel of reporting on it. More often than not, it was the same thing. When I launched *Rue Morgue* though, I realized there were ample reasons for this particular practice in the publishing world.

Although you may never know it, a big part of being a publisher is trying to appease people — readers, writers, publicity managers, filmmakers, artists, marketers and even, ideally, yourself. Making decisions about what goes in a particular issue is not as simple as it seems, especially when there are others who make it very clear which decision they want — and sometimes expect — you to make.

Publishers depend, in part at any rate, on advertising money, and most of that comes from the people who are producing the stuff the magazine ends up reviewing. All of which, of course, is of no concern to the person who gets the magazine after all the decisions have been made; only to make the most important one, when he or she judges whether to take the mag home or leave it on the shelf.

Part of the reason I started *Rue Morgue* in the first place was because I personally didn't have the highest regard for the magazines I grew up reading. *Rue Morgue* is kind of like a backlash in many respects. It comes at a time when watered down journalism is the norm; when there is precious little difference between checking out an article and checking out a commercial.

Unfortunately, this attitude seems to be suffusing modern entertainment at large: sometimes a movie, a book or a contemporary pop song is little more than an advertisement for a celebrity, a sentiment or a popular genre. Art is getting lost in commerce and with it, one of the corner stones of traditional journalism — the right and the obligation to assess contemporary entertainment and Tell It Like It Is.

Despite it all, I think *Rue Morgue* has performed adequately in this regard; we pride ourselves in being honest even if it hurts us, and believe me, it sometimes does. It's no surprise that writers (who have opinions to proclaim) expect honesty; as do the readers, who are always looking for something that's going to cut through the bullshit. But if marketers and promoters insist on standing in opposition to them, publishers will always find themselves in the middle with the promise of eternal support from producers on the one hand, and the scrutiny of the audience on the other.

It's kind of too bad it has to be this way. I wish there was more respect for journalistic traditions but I guess that may be too much to ask with the bottom line driving things so ruthlessly forward. Whatever the case, you can bet we'll maintain our standards. Nevermind what anyone else thinks, this publication wouldn't be worth it if we didn't care about ourselves.

-RG

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## ROD MORGUE

MAGAZINE

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# POST MORTEM

QUESTIONS · COMMENTS · CRITICISM

## From an Audio-ophile

You guys have the best music section in any horror magazine (come to think of it, I can't name one other horror magazine with a music section). Every time I get my copy of *Rue Morgue* I go straight for the Audio Drome and I'm never disappointed. You guys have some of the best reviews I've ever read in any magazine — period.

Looking forward to more,  
Robert Lane  
Kansas

## From FM & F to RM

I just received my copies of the back issues of *Rue Morgue* I ordered. Thanks very much! I have been a longtime reader of *Famous Monsters* and *Fangoria* and find *Rue Morgue* to be the best magazine out there for the horror fan such as myself! And thanks very much for the issue substitute, the new issue is awesome! Keep up the great work!

Regards,  
Stephen R. Hicks  
New Jersey

## Calling Carl J. Sakenick

I live in the US and get your book and I love it. But you do not write about great US filmmakers like Carl J. Sakenick. Please do a story on Sakenick. I want to know more about him.

With love,  
Helen Kemelman  
New York NY

Unfortunately, none of us have heard of Carl J. Sakenick. We'd love to know what he's done, however, send us some info or a URL. We wouldn't want to pass him up, especially if he's as great as you say.

## Cronenberg Not Mainstream

First you honor David Cronenberg by putting *Existenz* on the cover of issue #9, then you insult him by using *Crash* in the same sentence as the words "mainstream" and "thriller." Obviously someone hasn't seen the movie. The term "thriller" basically defines a genre popularized by Alfred Hitchcock; if you've read anything about



R.I.P.  
Issue #15 May/June 2000

Cronenberg, you know that he never wanted to make films using that template, and he never has. *Crash* isn't about building suspense. Also, a film doesn't get the Cannes Special Jury Prize for "Originality, Daring, and Audacity," by being mainstream.

Shawn Owens  
Minneapolis

## An Inspired Letter

Just received RM#15 and not only am enjoying it but also really like the artwork that was used for the RM#16 flyer (the skull fused with a house). It inspired me so much, I put together my own fantasy RM cover showing a ghost floating over the harbor of a ghost town. I have attached a JPG of it, check it out.

Madison Brents  
Texas

Amazing! We've reprinted it here so that the readers can check it out as well. Thanks!



## Gore-met Kicks Ass Again

Here's a note to let you know that your new Gore-met column is amazing. I'm tired of going through the glossy magazines and seeing them cover crap like *The Mummy* over and over again. *The Necro Files* and *Bride of Frank*? *Autopsy* and *Torso*? I'll take a second helping any day.

Mario Narducci  
New York NY

## Six String Rip-off Revisited

The review Brad Abraham wrote for *Six-String Samurai* ("Second-String Entertainment" RM#15) was right on the money. I heard about the film as it was being put together, and when I saw the cut I didn't know what all the hype was about. Don't get me wrong, it had a cool looking hero and an interesting premise — but it was far from great. I know too many people who saw this movie and came away shaking their heads. I guess bogus hype is also a part of independent films, and not just the blockbusters.

Anthony Morgan  
Los Angeles CA

## Faces of Death

Could you please help my cousin with information about some "realty" gore movies called *Faces of Death*. Is there some way of purchasing them? They are not for family viewing, but for a private collection.

Thanks,  
Cindy Smith  
Kingston ON

Unfortunately, the Canadian distributor for *Faces of Death* has gone out of business (!). We're sure somebody will pick up the slack sooner or later. Anyone out there interested?

## LETTERS POLICY

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to: [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com) or: POST MORTEM c/o *Rue Morgue Magazine* 1666 St. Clair Avenue West, 2nd Floor, Toronto ON, M6N 1H8 - CANADA

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Typical entry, January 24 — birth date of the ill-fated Sharon Tate, death date of serial killer Ted Bundy. On September 24, Dr. Seuss dies and *The Monkeys* premieres on CBC. Ernest Hemingway says farewell to brains on July 2, Elvis leaves the building on August 17 and *Night of the Living Dead* premieres on October 1. I was disappointed to see that my birthday (January 7) was notable only for when Hugh (The Strangers) Cornwell got busted for drug possession and Norm MacDonald earned from *SNL*.

Nevertheless, *The Calendar to Die For!* is nicely put together, with a lot of time and black and white pics cluttering up the pages (just the way it should be). Each day has a couple of morbid and hilarious facts, false graves, dead celebrities, bizarre deaths, kidnaps and all important dates related to *The New York Dolls*. This is a cool item that could get you noticed as the guy who knows when Vincent Van Gogh cut off his ear, Sammy Davis Jr. lost his eye or Telly Savalas sucked his last lollipop.

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### ROB ZOMBIE TOY \$14.00 US \$20.00 CAN

Still wet from his blood soaked *Movie Maniacs* line, toy guru Todd McFarlane has set his sights a little bit further, with this 9" tall plastic homage to horror rock icon Rob Zombie. The toy lives up to the kind of detail and professionalism that McFarlane brought to *Movie Maniacs*. Zombie sports hydraulic claws, flowing dreadlocks and an elaborate mock stone base with slime covered skulls.

Swivel joints include arms, legs, head and torso, with postures that are more indicative of horror than wanky rock star poses. Impressive and affordable. Currently available at retail or from [www.spm.com](http://www.spm.com).

Also look for McFarlane's upcoming Alice Cooper doll.

### WWW.FINDAGRAVE.COM

Did you know that Brandon Lee is buried at Lake View Cemetery in Seattle, Washington, next to his dad, Bruce? Did you know that Edgar Allan Poe has one of the nicest graves you'll ever see and that it's located at the Westminster Presbyterian Churchyard in Baltimore? And that he did not die of alcoholism, as is commonly thought, but of exposure?

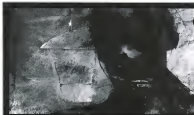
If your fascination with the morbid extends to famous people's gravesites, then [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com) is the place for you. With search categories by name, location and claim to fame (including Actors/Actresses, Writers, Criminals, Eccentrics and Oddities, Victims of Crime and Disaster and Religious Figures), it's dead, they've got it.

The virtual burial ground gives you pretty much everything you need to know to start mourning. Listings come complete with cause of death, birth and death dates, location of grave (with address and phone number) and sometimes even a picture.

As an added bonus, [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com) can give you a listing of dead stars by cemetery. Some of the notable finds we came up with were: Sharon Tate, Bela Lugosi (Holy Cross Cemetery, Culver City, CA), Alfred Hitchcock (cremated, ashes scattered) and Vlad Dracul (Monastery of Snagov Church, Romania). Who knows, maybe there's a celebrity cadaver in your neighbourhood and you just don't know it.

## Do you know the name of the SKINNY PUPPY album that this artwork is taken from?

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With film restoration on the upswing, it's hardly surprising that Warner Bros. decided to reissue a digitally remastered *Exorcist* to screens this Fall. But no one expected a revitalized version that hadn't been seen before...

# The EXORCIST ...Again



1973, Christmas. Snow falls from the evening sky and the warmth of a million coloured lights rises up to greet it and, in the movie theatres, a twelve-year-old girl is hurling vomit at a priest and masturbating with a bloody crucifix. Audiences are horrified but, somehow, they can't seem to stop themselves from witnessing the spectacle first hand.

Since then, the press, scholars and even its befuddled creators have wondered what exactly captivated *The Exorcist* as an above-average supernatural thriller (which is what they thought they had made) into a milestone event in the history of film.

At least part of the answer can be found in the words of director William Friedkin, who claimed that *The Exorcist* "strongly and realistically tries to make a case for spiritual forces in the universe - both good and evil."

The story of *The Exorcist* goes back to Silver Springs, Maryland in the year 1949: the account of a young boy who becomes demonically possessed is widely reported

An Interview with WILLIAM PETER BLATTY by Rod Gudino



"Billy Graham, at one point, declared that there was a force at work in the film; that it had some inexplicable power, and by that he meant that this power was to be found in the actual processed film."

by the American press. Despite the controversial nature of the event, the news eventually dwindles and would have died were it not for the efforts of one William Peter Blatty who, some fifteen years later, took an interest in the case.

A New York-based writer and a student of theology, Blatty had begun to make a name for himself as a writer of lightweight screen comedy (*A Shot in the Dark*, 1964) and satirical novels (*John Goldfarb Please Come Home*, 1962). When he failed to gain permission from the church to write an account of the Maryland exorcism, he decided to fictionalize it into a novel. His book, *The Exorcist*, was a huge success, but it only became ingrained in the North American psyche following the release of William Friedkin's feature-length adaptation.

"One of the prime allures of the supernatural thriller is that there is a world of spirit and that death doesn't mean our final destiny is oblivion," Blatty once commented. "So when the film of the supernatural is a truly good one, the public is strongly drawn to it."

\$360 million and twenty-five years later, audiences still didn't know that the film they saw wasn't the one that Blatty wrote, or the one that was originally screened by its director to executives at Warner Bros. All of that, of course, will change this Fall, when Warner Bros. — in conjunction with Blatty and Friedkin — re-release *The Exorcist* in its original form to theatres in the US and possibly Canada.

For Blatty, who had always approached the story from the point of view of its theological issues, this expanded "spiritual version" marks the end of a long battle that, at one time, even drove him to consider reshooting *The Exorcist* for television (see RM#4).

In fact, *The Exorcist* saga has been less than easy for Blatty. In 1989, he fought a battle to prevent the reshooting, recasting and renaming of his novel *Legion* (1983) as *The Exorcist III*. He lost, and once again his attempt to approach the issues of evil and faith was stifled by the Hollywood system.

Nevertheless, American cinema as a

whole still recognizes *The Exorcist* as a milestone in filmmaking, even if horror cinema has been less erudite. Its influence can be seen in a morass of possession movies which retroactively made a laughing stock of the supernatural issues addressed in the film. *The Exorcist*, however, remains curiously modern — even progressive — by today's standards, and retains a preeminent name with audiences, both in and out of the genre, worldwide.

"Most people take out of *The Exorcist* what they bring into it," noted Friedkin. "If you believe that the world is a dark and evil place, then *The Exorcist* will reinforce that. But if you believe that there is a force for good that combats and ultimately triumphs over evil, then you will be taking out of the film what we tried to put into it."

Blatty would certainly echo that sentiment. *Rue Morgue* spoke to William Peter Blatty this past May.

*Were you satisfied with the reissue of The Exorcist?*

Well, it isn't re-released quite yet, but yes, I've been asking for this version of the film for almost twenty-six years.

*You've been quite vocal over the years regarding your disappointment in the various cuts that Bill Friedkin made to the film, specifically the stairwell conversation between Father Merrin and Father Karras, and also the final scene featuring Father Dyer and Detective Kinderman.*

This version is the version that Bill [Friedkin] first showed me and I thought it was fabulous. Had he not shown me that cut, I may never have known it existed.

*Do you feel at all vindicated now that the film has been restored to the original cut?*

No, not quite vindicated. It was Blatty who came around; it was him who wanted to do the film. He just looked at the material — which he hadn't done in ten or fifteen years — and he was stunned. He remarked on the difference when he was in the editing room: "Look at that, that's great! I don't remember seeing these scenes."



**Iconography of Fear:** (top to bottom) Regan in a particularly hideous moment; Ellen Burstyn gets a nasty shock; the face from Father Karras' dream; the desecration of the Virgin.

## EXORCIST II: An Alternative View

When *Exorcist II: The Heretic* released in 1977, it was greeted with ridicule and contempt. Audiences laughed and pelted the screen, while critics seared upon the muddled script and the hammy performances. The director, John Boorman, hurriedly re-cut the film, but it has never lived down its original reception.

Boorman admitted his failure as a horror director, saying "I created the arena and don't throw enough Christians into it." What can Warner Bros. have expected? Boorman, who had just made the equally incoherent and much adored *Zardoz*, was hardly a conventional choice for the project, being more interested in metaphysical and spiritual subjects than in creating a traditional genre film. He certainly was not willing to merely produce a conventional sequel to *The Exorcist*.

*Exorcist II: The Heretic* is a failure, but it is a glorious and ambitious failure that challenges and ultimately explodes the genre. The themes of Friedkin's original become a theological tract on the nature of good and evil — no longer implacable opponents, but harmonizing and creating a delicate balance. In Boorman's typically fallen world, though, evil has the upper hand. Goodness draws evil upon itself; innocent Regan, survivor of a demonic possession and a healer capable of immense good, is the battleground.

Evil is seductive, often beautiful. We are taken on a visually intoxicating tour of the demon Pazuzu's domain and are "crushed by the wings of the locust." Hallowination merges with reality as Richard Burton's melodramatic Father Lamont inflicts himself with evil in order to save the soul of Regan, and the richness of William Fichtel's cinematography and Ennio Morricone's score turn the film into an almost indecently sensuous experience. Flying imagery descends with astonishing fluidity. Regan caresses a china dove and lives in a rooftop apartment surrounded by birds; the demon tempts her, whispering "we're going flying"; locusts swarm from the sky to ravage crops; the undergarment of a 747 in takeoff suddenly resembles the mandibles of a locust in flight; the cinema sweeps over miles of golden brown country into a primitive city of mud.

The characters in this film are, metaphorically, in the dark, unable to fully communicate with each other or with a distant God who seems impotent and uncaring in this incoherent vision of a world in revolt. Hallow, unnamed, triumphs over reason, despite the hollow victory of Goodness. How can Pazuzu, unresisted king of chaos, be defeated? The film, incapable of reigning in its ideas and implications, majestically self-destructs.

—Michael Sutton



**Spider Walk:** Two glimpses of the notorious sequence which did not make it to the original cut — but which has since been reinstated for theatrical rerelease.

*That's a long time to come to that conclusion!*

We've come to almost the opposite conclusion in preparation for the expanded version. And way back, twenty-six years ago, when I was arguing the importance of a particular scene, Bill would say, "listen, I'm not doing commercials for the Catholic faith." He felt that version was too spiritual, but that is exactly what I was after.

*How has the response to the rerelease been thus far?*

It has been uniformly great. You know, we are only in test markets right now, but every one of them declared it far superior to the released version.

*That's great.*

It's a relief. [laughs]

*Has this restoration of *The Exorcist* generated any interest, either from yourself or the studio, in restoring your original cut of *Exorcist III*, which also suffered from exhaustive post-production reshoots and re-edits prior to release?*

That's a different studio, that's Morgan Creek. Oh would God that would happen! We have to wait now until the fall when we have our program complete, and if *The Exorcist* does nearly as well as I expect it will, perhaps they will think it's worth having *The Exorcist III* redone too. Perhaps Warner will have something to do with that, since Morgan Creek is now distributed by Warner Bros.

*So you're optimistic?*

I'm hoping. I would love to get rid of the ending.

*The concept of man's relationship with God is crucial to much of your work, besides *The Exorcist*, obviously, it's also seen in *The Ninth Configuration* and most especially*

*Legion*, where you equated man's ordeal on Earth with Lucifer trying to reach divinity once more. Have those concerns changed in the years since you wrote those novels?

No. My final opinion on the matter is embodied in *Legion*. I'm not saying it's accurate, but it's the only one I've been able to find that accounts for the problem of evil in a world that allows for the existence of God. Whether or not it's a good theory remains to be seen.

*I can only imagine how disappointed you must have been to see the final cut of *Exorcist III*, which of course, was based on *Legion*.*

Well I knew that's what it was going to be; it was at a standoff. I shot my original screenplay and Morgan Creek was adamant that the ending should be changed. They called once they saw it and said, well, where's the exorcism? [laughs] Finally realizing that if I didn't do the edit, somebody else was going to do it, I went ahead with it.

*That must have been like committing hari kari.*

Oh my God...

*Though both *The Exorcist* and *Legion* are heavily rooted in Christian theology, the character who most seems to speak for the author — Detective Kinderman — is Jewish. Was this a deliberate attempt to provide an outsider perspective on the philosophical debates that inform both novels and, by extension, their filmic counterparts?*

Kinderman, I knew, was going to be my protagonist and, you know, he's Jewish as we find him in the story. I thought that fact would make him ideal because it would bring a critical sense into the story since he does not follow my Catholic party line. He is not constrained by my theological bias.

(continued on page 12)



# Call It Legion, For There Are Many (Versions)

by Joseph O'Brien

"He thought of death in its infinite groanings, of Aetere ripping out living hearts and of cancer and three-year olds buried alive and he wondered whether God was alien and cruel, but then remembered Beethoven and the dappling of things and the lark and 'Hurrah for Karamazov' and kindness. He stared at the sun coming up behind the Capitol, streaking the Potomac with orange light, and then down at the outrage, the horror at his feet. Something had gone wrong between man and his creator, and the evidence was here on this bathhouse dock."

So begins *Legion*, William Peter Blatty's followup to his phenomenally successful novel *The Exorcist*. Like *The Exorcist*, *Legion* would eventually serve as the basis for a film adaptation, this time directed by the author himself. But thanks to studio second-guessing, the film—referred to variously as *Legion*, *Exorcist III*, *Exorcist 1990*, *The Exorcist 15 Years After*—was of substantially different character, in both form and content, than the novel or its director's original intentions. Regardless it remains, even in compromised form, an unsettling film that continues to frighten and provoke on levels visceral, intellectual and spiritual.

Ironically, the novel began life as a film treatment. Following the unprecedented box office success of *The Exorcist* in 1973, Blatty, director William Friedkin and producer Jerry Weintraub had discussed the possibility of a cinematic sequel with Warner Brothers, working from a short outline by Blatty. For a variety of reasons the project evaporated, and Warner went on to produce the disastrous *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (see sidebar) with none of the original's creative players.

Meanwhile, Blatty transformed his treatment into a novel. Published in 1983, *Legion* picks up a dozen years after the events of *The Exorcist* and focuses on world-weary Jewish homicide detective William Kinderman and Jesuit Father William Dyer, characters who had hovered on the outskirts of the first novel's narrative. Here they take center stage as Kinderman investigates a series of religiously-themed killings seemingly committed by the "Gemini Killer," a serial murderer executed twelve years earlier. Ultimately the skeptical Kinderman comes to believe that the spirit of the Gemini may have possessed the body of his and Dyer's best friend, the late Father Damien Karras.

As with its predecessor, the action here serves primarily as a vehicle for the discussion of the author's spiritual concerns—primarily what Blatty refers to as "the problem of evil" (a subject he also covers in his novel *The Ninth Configuration* and its motion picture counterpart).

Kinderman's investigations provide the backdrop for ruminations on the nature of angels, the apparent necessity of human suffering, and the mysteries of faith, matter and the creation of the Universe. By the story's conclusion, both the author and his protagonist seem to have arrived at a workable metaphysical solution, one allowing for a God who is good despite a world seemingly saturated with evil. If only the problem of Hollywood were as easy to comprehend.

Blatty adapted the novel into a screenplay with himself attached to direct (having previously performed those duties on *The Ninth Configuration*), ultimately penning a deal with Morgan Creek Productions to produce *Legion* for the big screen in 1989. George C. Scott was cast as Kinderman, taking over from the late Lee J. Cobb, and Ed Flanders essayed the role of Father Dyer (played by real-life Jesuit Reverend William O'Malley in *The Exorcist*). Veter-

an character actor Brad Douffl came aboard to play the mysterious "Patient X," who may or may not be the Gemini Killer in Karras' resurrected body.

Unfortunately Jason Miller, who had played Karras in the first film, proved unavailable. Consequently, Blatty opted to film the Patient X scenes from a unique perspective: "One had to believe," he says, "in this version, that the camera saw only the soul of the Gemini Killer, not the body of Karras."

Despite the fact that he was adapting his own material, Blatty made significant alterations to the film version, most notably to the conclusion. In the novel, the resurrected Gemini Killer perishes when he learns that his father (whom he sought to shame through his murders) has died himself; Blatty's original *Legion* script also contains this relatively low-key climax. During filming, he opted for a more dramatic confrontation, ending in Patient X's death at Kinderman's hands.

"I had been thinking that perhaps the novel's ending was (a) too 'soft' for the screen; that it had to be more dramatic and explosive; and that (b) it required thinking, a commodity sometimes observed to be scarce among both studio executives and the younger moviegoing audience," Blatty says. "As I sat there examining the pages of the screenplay's ending, the 'execution' ending just 'dropped' from that usual, mysterious place."

Those changes aside, the film that reportedly emerged was an engaging, atmospheric supernatural thriller filled with offbeat characters, rich multilayered dialogue and a showstopping performance from Douffl as Patient X. What it did not have, at least in the mind of Morgan Creek exec James Robinson, was anything to do with *The Exorcist*. Reshoots were ordered, adding a reported \$4 million to the film's \$11 million budget.

Blatty, contractually obligated to comply, added a subplot involving a new character, Father Morning (Nicol Williamson), who arrives at the eleventh hour to perform the exorcism (complete with expensive—and completely out-of-place—visual effects) that Robinson felt the film (by now officially—and inappropriately—christened *Exorcist III*) required.

In a further bid to more closely tie this film to *The Exorcist*, Jason Miller (who had become available in the interim) was brought in to completely reshoot all of the Patient X scenes. Blatty, reluctant to sacrifice Douffl's impressive portrayal, chose to cut the two performances together into a seamless whole, achieving, almost by accident, one of the film's greatest creative coups.

(continued on following page)



That Scene: one of the biggest scares in the history of horror.



Legion: a frightening, multi-faceted puzzle.

Even in this form, the film retains at least some of the spiritual subtext and character Blatty sought to instill in what could have become, in less capable hands, just another jashy, in-name-only sequel. Its success is, sadly, still crippled by the new material, with *Kindergarten* investigation and confrontation with Patient X first diluted by distracting cutaways to Father Morning (who is essentially in a different movie altogether) and ultimately betrayed by the tacked-on exorcism sequence.

Nonetheless, the film's good points outshine its imposed flaws, especially during Scott's impassioned interpretation of Blatty's monologues about the inevitability of death ("The whole world is a homicide victim.") and his acceptance of spiritual evil ("I believe. In you").

There is also Flanders' beautifully understated portrayal of Dyer, and the aforementioned bottled lightning of the Doud/Miller Patient X.

It's also impossible to discuss any version of the film without at least one mention of what has become known as "That Scene" amongst aficionados. One hour and twelve minutes into the film, Blatty concocts one of the most beautifully executed scares in the history of horror cinema, comprised almost entirely of a single static shot lasting nearly four minutes – the kind of sustained tension nearly impossible to achieve in these days of seizure-inducing rapid cuts and nanosecond attention spans – climaxing with the appearance of a white-cloaked apparition carrying a very big set of surgical shears. An elaborate gag? Maybe, but undeniably effective, made all the more startling by the sombre tone of the film surrounding it, and certainly one that could go head-to-spinning-head with any of *The Exorcist's* big moments for sheer shock value. And it works every time.

Given that Warner has gone to great lengths recently to restore Blatty's preferred cut of *The Exorcist*, and that the rights to *Exorcist II* have recently returned to the studio, is there a chance of seeing a similar restoration of Blatty's version of *Legion*?

"I would dearly love to restore the original version that I shot and cut together, i.e., without the exorcism sequence," says the author. "But I have had no indication that either Morgan Creek or Warner has an interest in so doing."

What's it going to take, Warner Brothers? A sign from God? ☞

(Continued from page 10)

Another significant aspect of *The Exorcist* is that it transcended its commercial success; somehow it became one of the most popular films in the history of cinema.

More than that, it was a phenomenon.

That's an interesting point, because *The Exorcist* is one of the few films that are generally classified as hard horror and yet it has found a huge crossover audience. Why do you think that is so?

First of all, William Friedkin and I have adamantly denied that *The Exorcist* is a horror film. When I wrote the novel, one of the things in my mind was to write a supernatural detective story with elements of a psychological thriller, and that's what I did with the film as well. There was suspense and so forth, but it was definitely not horror. Now why it worked in such a special way, why is it so crude emotionally? Well, you have to literally develop excitement so that even word of mouth about the film has prevented vast numbers of people from coming to see it because they're frightened. After I wrote the novel, I heard of people refusing to allow it into their homes. Billy Graham, at one point, declared that there was a force at work in the film; that it had some inexplicable power, and by that he meant that this power was to be found in the actual processed film. I agreed with him that it had an inexplicable power, but this is a power that is rendered emotionally, that is greater than the sum of its parts, in my opinion.

I think that the religious component of the film was tremendously important in this regard, especially in its reverential approach to the Catholic faith. Even though many people may profess to be atheists, the reality is that North American culture is rooted in Christian theology and obviously, *The Exorcist* struck that chord.

That is quite so. The public by and large desperately craves any reality and a large part of that is the belief in life after death. Somehow those stories stick. They impress something that the unconscious apprehends; a truth. I remarked earlier that the work has an effect upon the psyche and the emotions that is greater than the sum of its parts. But why? I suspect – to borrow from Jung – that it expresses "a truth of the blood," the knowledge embedded in our souls, in the collective unconscious, that God exists, that death is not an ending, but that suffering, in some mysterious way, is essential to our growth and to achieving our ultimate destiny. To

touch upon one small point to meditate upon regarding this, does anyone think it possible to be virtuous – to be brave, kind, generous, altruistic – in a universe in which we knew it would be impossible ever to suffer the slightest pain? Think about it.

An interesting fact about *The Exorcist* is many people saw it when they were quite young; most of my peers, for example, saw it before their fifteenth birthday.

Naughty, naughty. [laughs] It's foolishness. When my daughter wanted to read the novel before publication, she kept nagging and nagging and finally I took a felt pen and I marked out huge sections and then I gave it to her. [laughs]

I did hear that you were planning a remake of *The Exorcist* for television. Is that true? That was thought about when I finally became convinced that Warner did not want to release the original cut. At that point I said, well, I'd like to shoot the entire novel as I wrote it.

So obviously now that it has been released in its entirety, there are no plans to go ahead with that?

Absolutely not, no. I'm finished with that.

What do you think of this new trend towards re-editing films? I guess, in your case, it may be a matter of only having one way to go, and it's up, right?

That's right! [laughs] Although we're not thinking of calling this a new version or a truer, greater more expanded version of *The Exorcist*. We're simply putting all the scenes back that belonged there in the first place. They were written and were always intended to be there.



This includes the spider walk scene?

Yes, but it's not the one that you saw in the twenty fifth anniversary re-release of the film. I found new files, a couple of things that were from a personal collection of mine. I saw that in the first showing of the film.

William, I have one final question for you. Have you learned anything about the nature of human and/or supernatural evil as a result of your work on *The Exorcist* and *Legion*? I learned nothing. I emptied into these works everything I had arrived at concerning God, the problem of evil, and the mystery of goodness. The fact is that my research into the phenomenon of exorcism made me write *The Exorcist*. I think it's a genuine phenomenon even though there is no hard evidence one way or the other. It's still a theory, but it's a satisfactory theory to me. ☞

# Still Death

## The Cemetery Portraits of Pamela Williams

by Amos Carlen



Somewhere between the living and the dead, between the beautiful and the eerie, lie the photographs of Pamela Williams. Taken in cemeteries throughout Europe – Italy, Austria and France – Williams' portraits focus on the statues that stand over the graves, their precisely rendered features evoking loss, desire, secrecy and melancholia.

Not surprisingly, the photographs have graced book covers, television screens and, this past May, have also been the focus of an exhibition in Toronto, Canada.

"I am not a documentary photographer," Williams told *Rue Morgue*. "What I'm doing is, rather than standing far away and shooting the piece in its whole context, I'm moving in very close and treating it like a portrait."

A native of Canada, Williams' fascination with cemetery sculptures began as a quest to find more realistic statuary to capture on film. She realized that the most visual sculptures were those that had been affected by acid rain, dirt and soot over a number of years, and this naturally brought her to the European burial grounds.

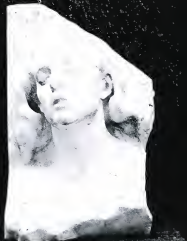
"These statues have more depth because the dirt goes into the crevices, in the eyes and the lips and such," she says. "It accentuates and creates a shadow quality that in reality is not there."

Most of Williams' subjects date from the late 1800s, and reflect the societies which created the sculptures.

"In France, for example, the idea of the statues on tombstones was to make death more romantic," she explains. "Originally, they used to have mass graves and when you died you were pitched in and they added lime. When you decomposed, they took your bones out and used them to decorate the outside of the cemetery. In a way, these other cemeteries – they call them garden cemeteries – were a reaction against the way that death was dealt with before. They didn't want to be so gruesome."

Pamela Williams' cemetery photographs can be glimpsed on the world wide web at [www.interlog.com/~romantic](http://www.interlog.com/~romantic). The site also contains information on future showings.

A book showcasing her art, *Lost Kiss*, can be ordered for \$25.00 CAN, \$17.50 US by mail order to Pamela Williams 78 Lakefield Dr; Don Mills ON; M3B 2H1 CANADA.





by Aaron Lupton

Rock n' roll has periodically aligned itself with real in-the-flesh fear since its inception. In the late seventies, horror and rock began showcasing a brand new mutual respect for one another: the walking B-film Misfits and the kooky B-52s were perfect lead-ins to the camp outrageousness of The Cramps and the dark storytelling of Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. Then there was Goth, with the *gyant* affectation of Bauhaus, the blackened hard-rock of The Cult and the perfunctory aggro pop of Ministry, the make-up came on and one of the most cheerless trends in popular music began.

#### Despite

the great music that was borne out of that inky darkness, it seemed that a lot of these bands took their gloom and misery a little too seriously.

Enter The Vampire Beach Babes: ready and willing to put the fun back in funeral, with a martini in one hand, a Gibson in the other, and a stake to be driven through the heart of anyone who thinks

they've finally figured out what all those kids in white make-up and black lace were about in the first place. Out of the ashes of The New World Disorder (a near-fatal accident in the early '90s Toronto music scene) sprang Ricky Las Vegas and Baron Marcus, ready to follow what had been their heart's desire for a long time.

"Ricky and I have always tended toward this late 1950s kind of sound," explains vocalist Marcus. "And when NWD broke, we really wanted to go after this horror-comedy and a deep dark B-movie scariness, and that comes out very pointedly in our music."

"There's an old saying called rock n' roll," adds lead guitarist Ricky Las Vegas. "We were missing the roll. It was this heavy, angst-ridden

that icon of horror who's been basking in the press since Bram Stoker.

Dressed head to toe in vampire garb, including skull and coffin shaped rings on their fingers, these walking cartoon characters (and we mean that in the most respectful way) see the vampire mythology as invitingly complex.

"Vampires are an analogy to what is happening today," professes Marcus. "People like vampires because they tend to be a little sexy but at the same time they're not necessarily predictable. You can get the Anne Rice vampires that are kind of cheesy, and on the other hand you've got your elegant Bela Lugosi. Vampire mythology is reflecting a very pervasive pop culture that the people can identify with, and there's a lot of room for all these different kinds of vampires. Everybody can identify with the spectrum, I like seeing how people interpret vampires in pop culture. I don't really find it disdainful, I find it inspiring."

Rounded out by three true-to-life babes, including Laurie a.k.a. Don't-Dare-Call-Me-Babe-Babe (keyboards), Trashy Babe (bass), and Invisible Babe (who has yet to show up for practice), the group has landed a likely promotional push (their first) on the new *Attila* compilation (*Gothic Sanctuary* (see

RM#15), where they rub leather with Love and Rockets, Sisters of Mercy and Bauhaus.

"We're not worthy!" exclaims Marcus, quoting another "great" Canadian. "But at the same time I do think we have something to offer. It's hard for Bauhaus to do Gothic: Surf-A-Rama, whereas we've got carte blanche."

"Yeah, I can't say with a straight face that we're the next Bauhaus," adds Ricky, "but I don't think we want to be, and we're not really going in that direction. We live it up just a little."

The final nail in the coffin?

"We're the rock in the vampire snowball. Just when you think you've got it all summed up, you get hit with The Vampire Beach Babes." ♫



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# TERROR on TV



## SYNOPSIS BY:

Brad Abraham  
John W. Bowen  
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**Mindless repetition**, incessant cloning, blatant rip-offs, mediocre acting, endless commercial interruptions, excessive cutting, predictable action, reruns, watered-down stories, superficiality – with all of this going against it, it's a miracle that television produced anything worth remembering.

This is doubly the case for TV horror, since the boob tube has traditionally been a favourite target for moralists and reformers agitating against its corrupting effects on youth.

Oddly enough, some of the best genre shows – *The Twilight Zone* in particular – came out in a time when restrictions were at an all-time high. In a way, all those regulations forced producers to put the emphasis on the stuff that mattered most – like characterization, plot and stellar writing.

Things have changed, of course, but it is only recently that producers have taken advantage of the changing climate to deliver quality horror programming. After decades of safely dabbling in the genre (*The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*) and overdosing on action (too many to mention), television terror entered a golden age with David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (a revolution for TV on par with Serling's *Twilight Zone*), and Chris Carter's *Millennium* (one of the most ambitious hard horror projects ever attempted on the small screen, despite its early and sloppy demise).

Nevertheless, the history of horror on television is impressive and probably more varied than the average viewer realizes. Looking back on the track record and trying to choose the best from over fifty years is a difficult task and, inevitably, a stupid one. There are too many great shows with too many great episodes to whittle down into a mere 22. We could only admit, at the outset, that the task would be futile. But we couldn't resist. For what it's worth, here are the ones we liked best, the standouts, the gems – in a word, our favourites.



## 1 The Twilight Zone CBS 1959 - 64

The show that laid the groundwork for all that was to follow, Rod Serling's seminal anthology remains a cultural touchstone for millions of TV viewers. Although envisioned by its creator as an allegorical fantasy program, the show remains best remembered for its side-trips into horror – *Nightmare At 20,000 Feet* (a.k.a. "The one with the man on the wing terrorizing William Shatner" – see page 54), *The Eye Of The Beholder* (a.k.a. "The one with those pig-faced doctors") and *The Hitch-Hiker* (a.k.a. "The one with the hitch-hiker") being notable standouts. *The Twilight Zone* expanded to an hour for its fourth season, but reverted to its thirty-minute format (for which it was best suited) for its fifth, and last, season. Created by Serling and produced by Buck Houghton, *The Twilight Zone* gave television the imagination of the genre's top minds, among them Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont and George Clayton Johnson. -JWB and RG

## 2 American Gothic CBS 1995 - 96

Someone's at the door! It's Shaun Cassidy and he has a big, bloody knife. Who'd have thought that the teen heartthrob/ex-Hardy Boy was capable of creating one of the best non-anthology horror series to ooze through the airmwaves? Gary Cole was chillingly believable as the charismatic and ruthless Sheriff Lucas Buck (the devil?) – who spent the series trying to claim his son. Caleb was conceived when Sheriff Buck raped his mother and orphaned when Buck systematically and impudently killed off the rest of his family. Executive producer was *Evil* Dead originator Sam Raimi. -DLS





### Twin Peaks

ABC 1990-91

Despite the innovations that made *Eraserhead* and *Blue Velvet* instant classics, *Twin Peaks* remains in some respects David Lynch's boldest move ever, a hit TV series that destroyed practically every convention associated with TV, yet managed to remain within the tight-assed boundaries of prime time. Once described as "where the macabre meets the absurd," *Twin Peaks* is equal parts soap opera, dark comedy, murder mystery and psychological thriller. An impossibly picturesque Northwestern town is thrown into chaos by the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee), a popular but troubled high school girl, when FBI agent Dale Cooper (*Blue Velvet*'s Kyle MacLachlan) comes to town to investigate, he soon discovers that this murder has set many more wheels in motion. Recalling *Blue Velvet*, this town is a dark mosaic of deceit, brutality, shady business deals and even organized crime, and populated by the kind of eccentric characters one can only expect from Lynch. Episode two, *Zen, Or The Art Of Catching A Killer*, featuring the first appearance of the nightmarish Killer Bob (the late Frank Silva) and The Man From Another Place (Michael Anderson), came as close to capturing the elusive quality of a nightmare on film as anything produced before or since. *Twin Peaks* was an immediate sensation upon its 1989 premiere; once the hype of the first season subsided, however, viewership declined sharply. Storylines were so convoluted and bizarre that missing a single episode could confuse even the most devoted follower of the series; the problem was compounded by ABC's tendency to change the show's timeslot every few weeks. Viewing back-to-back episodes is much more agreeable — check your local video store. -JWB



### The X-Files

20th Century Fox 1993 - current

Although it took two seasons to formulate itself into the stuff of greatness, *The X-Files* was a success from the get-go because it waded into the cultural mythology of the 20th century: the paranormal, weird science, anti-matter, ghosts and most significantly, North America's near-mythical belief in UFOs and government conspiracies. Chris Carter demonstrated he had done his homework; in seven seasons, he peeled back the layers of the increasingly complex modern UFO myth: men in black, abductions, Roswell, Area 51, the greys, and global coverups. Though its prime is long past, and the conspiracy plot episodes amounted to a buncha nuttin', *The X-Files* preserved a creepy zeitgeist in standalone eps like *The Host* (featuring future writer Darin Morgan as the repulsive Flukeman), *Die Hand Die Verletzt* (a demonic substitute teacher AND a devil-worshipping PTA AND a snake eats a guy) and the I-can't-believe-we-got-away-with-this episode *Home*, featuring the inebriated, deformed Peacock brothers and their multiple amputee mother whom they keep stuffed under the bed. Horrified, the Fox Network pulled this one from their summer rerun schedule (although it still appears in syndication). Also notable were episodes modeled after horror films (ice, on John Carpenter's *The Thing* and *Beyond The Sea*, on *The Exorcist III*). *The X-Files*' twin leads — hyper-sensitive hero Fox Mulder, and brassy sidekick Dana Scully — have become stone-faced icons in a huge market of novels, comics and fanzines.

-RG & JCB



### The Outer Limits

ABC 1963 - 65

Unlike *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits* was a horror show through and through. Producer-creators Leslie Stevens and Joseph Stefano crafted an incredible series of televised terror tales, from the thought-provoking parandia of Harlan Ellison's *Demon With A Glass Hand* to the genuinely disturbing *Nightmare* to the haunting weirdness of *The Forms Of Things Unknown*. A classic. -JCB



### The Prisoner

ITC 1967

Proving that paranoia was not an invention of the '90s, Patrick MacGowan's '60s cult show, *The Prisoner*, makes *The X-Files* look like a nursery school outing. Only 17 episodes were made of chronicling Number 6's misadventures in the mysterious Village. At the end, viewers were left scratching their heads. Why did Number 6 quit the secret service? Who was Number 1? What the hell just happened? But love it or hate it, *The Prisoner* remains one of the most innovative and darkly surreal television programs ever. -PC



### Doctor Who

BBC 1963 - 1989

The longest-running genre show in television history (25 years and counting before the BBC unceremoniously pulled the plug), *Doctor Who* reached its peak in North America with Season 12, the beginning of Tom Baker's tenure as the time traveling renegade, the fourth of no less than eight actors to play the role. Under the guidance of story editor Robert Holmes, forays into genuine horror became the series' norm, rather than the occasional exception, with stand-



out stories like *The Seeds Of Doom*, *The Hand Of Fear* and *The Horror Of Fang Rock*. The series came to an abrupt end in 1989 with the filming of *Ghost Light*, a complex and unsettling tale as surreal as anything ever put on the small screen. -JCB



### Scooby Doo, Where Are You?

Hanna-Barbera 1969 - 71

Silly, hilarious, *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* was a Saturday morning horrorshow through and through. Such was the show's liberal borrowing from horror films and formulas that the plot in which the villain is "unmasked" is now referred to as the "Scooby Doo ending." The show softly terrorized an entire generation of children, with guest villains such as the Miner '49er and The Creeper, not to mention Shaggy's eating habits (chocolate cheeseburgers anyone?). Atmospheric and creepy (the show exploited traditional horror movie settings), *Scooby-Doo* instilled in children the need to be ever vigilant — the Ghost Clown haunting the local fair may be only a jewel thief, but maybe not.... Bored revisionists later saw Shaggy as a cowardly pot-head hallucinating that his dog can talk (yeah, right...), Velma a closet lesbian, and just what was with Fred and Daphne? Before Scrappy showed up and made the disastrous transition from funny to idiotic, *Scooby-Doo* was the starting point for many a horror fan's journey into the world of the macabre. -BA



### The Munsters

1964 - 6

The Sixes: upheavals, peace movement, civil rights, yadda-yadda-yadda. The social turbulence was well-documented in that decade's feature films but went virtually unnoticed in bland TV-land... or did it? On the surface, *The Munsters* was just one more lightweight sitcom, but a second look reveals an extraordinarily clever satire with some rather weighty issues on its mind. The titular family — beneath their admittedly monstrous facade — are gentle, polite, well-meaning and comically wholesome, while their "normal" neighbors are actually hateful scum who constantly plot against them. A *Sixes* sitcom is an odd place to find a scathing (if admittedly one-dimensional) indictment of bigotry, but back then I guess you had to take it wherever you could get it. -JWB

## 10 Buffy The Vampire Slayer

Warner Bros. 1997 - current

Some people just can't get past the concept, but for those who can, *Buffy* provides some of the most intelligent and enjoyable entertainment that has ever appeared on the small screen. Virtually anyone who is likely to be interested is already a fan. The show works wonderfully as allegory for high school and coming of age and the dialogue is consistently smart and funny. It's nice to see insecure, often confused little Buffy kick ass - although she is occasionally overwhelmed by her powers and responsibilities. And if that isn't enough for you, Buffy manages to be sexy, scary and exciting when the situation warrants. A few valid complaints include: Cuddly Demon Disease (monsters on this series are often not evil or scary); Scooby Syndrome (show is sometimes too self-consciously cute); *Dawson's Creek* infection (Buffy seldom falls prey to the nauseating teen angst that characterizes other current hit series). -DLS

## 11 Millennium

Fox 1996 - 99

A former FBI agent is recruited by the Millennium Group - a powerful cult that has survived from biblical times and may be engineering the apocalypse. After getting off to a great start, many thought this series from Chris Carter went to hell in the third and final season, but despite the occasional lapse, *Millennium* maintained its high quality and continued to feature some brilliant episodes, including Jose Chung's Doomsday Defense and Somehow, Satan Got Behind Me, both written by *X-Files* alumnus Darin Morgan. The eternally morose and otherwise expressionless Lance Henriksen as Frank Black was one of the weakest aspects of the show. -DLS

## 12 Kolchak: The Night Stalker

Dan Curtis Productions 1974 - 75

After two genuinely good Kolchak TV movies (see RMM7) turned into major ratings winners, producer Dan Curtis quickly rolled out this truly awful regular series, which lasted all of a season and quickly vanished from the air. Nevertheless it remains worthwhile, if only for Darren McGavin's dead-on deadpan portrayal of hapless reporter Carl Kolchak, and for the sheer goofiness of man-in-a-suit monster-of-the-week format. Cheese, glorious cheese. -JOB

## 13 The New Outer Limits

Triology Entertainment 1995 - 2000

Despite the anthology format, this reinvented series is as formulaic as anything on television - morality lessons demonstrating the hackneyed axiom "there are things man was never meant to know." There are always good production values and there have been a few excellent and memorable episodes (many with scripts by Steven Barnes) such as *Silich* in Time with Amanda Plummer, plus a couple of well-adapted SF stories including *Sandkings* and *Inconstant Moon*. Other than that, it's the same old offensive stories about the evils of science: android nannies, gene tampering, immortality, population control...ad nauseum. -DLS

## 14 Ray Bradbury Theater

HBO 1986 - 88

Another anthology series, this one notable for the fact that every episode was based on a short story and written by the titular fantasist (who also hosted). Despite uneven direction and often pat production values, this show managed on the strength of Bradbury's storytelling, most notably in episodes like *The Crowd* and *The Small Assassin*. -JOB

## 15 Tales From the Crypt

HBO 1989 - 96

From the pages of the 1950s/60s E.C. comics' *Tales From The Crypt* series, the creative team of Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver and Robert Zemeckis revived the phenomenon in 1989 for a successful seven year, 93 episode run on HBO. The gruesome stories and trademark dark, witty humor frightened and delighted viewers from while reestablishing *The Cryptkeeper* (John Kassir) as the world's foremost snappy bag of bones. Well crafted episodes and a slew of big-name guest stars successfully propelled both the series



## 16 Friday The 13th: The Series

Paramount 1987 - 1990

In 1987, Frank Mancuso Jr. decided that five sequels to the popular *Friday* films were not enough, and that it was time to take his pet (which he had been producing since 1981's first *Friday* sequel) into the living rooms of North America. The catch? No Mr. Voorhees. But even beyond that minor detail, *Friday the 13th: The Series* was really in a class of its own. Styling away from the sex and violence that the title had become known for (yet still managing to achieve condemnation from TV critics) *F13: The Series* was a story-driven production, and showcased some of the most fiercely unique writing in televised horror history. While ultimately a low budget show, *Friday the 13th* boasted strong director credentials including a young Atom Egoyan (*Cupid's Quiver*), a primed David Cronenberg (*Faith Healer*, a silver medal winner at the International Film and TV awards), and an uncharacteristically violent Armand Mastroianni, who directed numerous episodes including one of the series' most over-the-top: *Demonhunter*. The series revolved around cousins Micki and Ryan, whose mission it was (along with their friend Jack Marshak), to locate and retrieve various cursed objects scattered throughout the US. Each show would involve a different cursed object, from a quilt pin (*The Poison Pen*) to the scalpel once owned by Jack the Ripper (*Doctor Jack*). While the series was initially successful, ranking as the second highest rated syndicated show next to *Star Trek: TNG*, it was to last only two more seasons, suffering from the same disease that its parent film series had become known for: repetition. Each episode a different object was restored and the same lesson learned: with great power comes great responsibility; abuse of one's advantage at the expense of others will lead only to one's own demise. -AL



# TELEVISION Salutes Stephen King

For a horror writer, making it to TV is, in many ways, a bad thing. Audiences weaned on *Party of Five* and *Friends* aren't going to be particularly adept at appreciating the darker nuances of the best horror – certainly not the nail-biting grue that Stephen King has made a career of serving up.

Nevertheless, mini-series producers have clamoured after King – perhaps more in name than in content – with varying degrees of unsucess, if not quite failure. Television renditions of his works have been nowhere near their literary counterparts, but not all were dismal.

Here are a few, rated accordingly by the *Rue Morgue* staff.

## 1 Storm Of The Century (1999)

This 248-minute epic is classic King fare, majestically shot in a fake Maine town (actually Pickering, Ontario with a lot of potato flake and foam passing as snow). The story is deceptively simple: a sinister stranger with a mysterious request shows up during one of the worst blizzards ever. Direction by Craig Baxley puts the emphasis on mood, and King's script manages to juggle ten plus characters while driving the plot to its sinister climax. *Storm of the Century* could have benefitted from a trim job, but there is no denying that King hit the mark spot on; this is about as good as it gets. -RG

## 2 'Salem's Lot (1979)

Straker and Barlow, antique dealers, have set up shop in the sleepy Maine town of 'Salem's Lot and the townsfolk are dropping like flies – it doesn't take long before the word 'vampire' is circulating in hushed tones. The script is good and the performances range from adequate to strong. Sure, Barlow is a bad *Nosferatu* rip-off, but when the mist starts forming outside of the bedroom windows and the vampires start scratching at their neighbours' doors looking for snacks, this made for TV movie manages to generate some genuine chills. The only real problem – and it's a serious one – is the uninspired directing and cinematography – strictly *Brady Bunch*. -ES

## 3 The Tommyknockers (1993)

Jimmy Smits and Mary Helgenberger star in King's horror/sci-fi story about a woman who stumbles into an ancient UFO buried in the woods behind her home. The object gives her various neighbours a strange new creativity and intelligence. Director John Power and screenwriter Lawrence D. Cohen have a good feel for the story, and mix a strong dose of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* into King's middle-class middle-American hillbilly town. Ex-porn star Traci Lords vaporizes people with her lipstick laser and the ending is, literally, out of this world. *Tommyknockers* was eventually cut to 120 minutes and released on vid, which lost some of the banalities in favour of a tighter, more impressive film. -RG



'Salem's Lot: Nosferatu knock-off Barlow the vampire and victim.

## 4 The Stand (1994)

Clocking in at exactly six hours, King's most enduringly popular novel is at least given adequate screen time to unfold. The cast is superb, but their efforts are undermined by director Mick Garris' pedestrian sensibilities and King's distressing tendency to dumb his material way down whenever he adapts for the screen. A number of pivotal moments are scuttled by cheeseball effects – what's the deal with Randall Flagg sprouting those stupid devil horns? Yuck! Most aggravating in this case is the coulda-been factor: King originally envisioned a two-part theatrical release to be directed by George Romero, and has his first choice for Flagg was Clint Eastwood. Instead, we got the best anyone can reasonably expect from a made-for-TV movie: an exercise in adequacy. -JWB

## 5 IT (1990)

This epic novel is second only to *The Stand* in length, but the pinheads in charge insisted on compressing it mercilessly into just three hours and clumsily neutering the novel's graphic violence for TV. King's extravagant web of subplots is decimated, and the recurring images that propelled the book to such a powerful climax are reduced to so many non-sequiturs. Like *The Stand*, this one is very nearly saved by production design, impeccable casting and superb performances, but the weak-kneed network nannies have left *IT* devoid of teeth, balls or a brain. -JWB

## 6 The Shining (1997)

Unsatisfied with Stanley Kubrick's loose adaptation of his bestseller, King and director Mick Garris (with whom he had previously collaborated with on the lukewarm adaptation of *The Stand* and the stinkiest that was *Sleepwalkers*) set out to do it "right." While the six-hour made-for-TV "event" was completely faithful to the text of the novel, it completely missed the mark on every other level. Unscripted, obvious and frequently ludicrous, featuring an absurd "happy ending," this "faithful adaptation" did nothing but prove Kubrick's rightness in chucking most of the novel and concentrating on the scary atmosphere in the first place. -JO'B

and the Cryptkeeper to a modern day cult status, spanning two feature films and an animated series. -TD

## 17 LEXX: The Dark Zone Stories

**Saltier Street Films 1997 - current**  
A Canadian/German co-production, *LEXX* *The Dark Zone Stories* was originally introduced as an offbeat sci-fi miniseries regarding the plight of a race of warriors, the Brunnen-G, in the face of mass extinction at the hands of His Shadow. The story revolved in the absurd and hilarious; a robot head in love with a gorgeous blonde (turned rehead for the show's eventual incarnation as a series), an undead hero, and an escaped wage slave who takes over the Lexx, a penis-shaped spaceship with the power to obliterate planets. Now in its third season, *LEXX* oscillates between parodying aspects of the sci-fi and horror canon and generally overindulging in its own weirdness. Inconsistently enlightening, with occasional gruel from notorious effects man Jörg (Nekromantik) Buttgeriet. -RG

## 18 Dark Shadows

**ABC 1966-71**  
*Dark Shadows* holds a unique spot in television history — a daytime horror soap opera. When it began airing on ABC in 1966, the show was somewhat of a curio — a soap with gothic overtones and a hint of the supernatural. It wasn't until the following year and the introduction of guilt-ridden vampire Barnabas Collins that *Dark Shadows* became a national phenomenon spawning a multitude of merchandise and two feature films before its demise in 1971. While the show did suffer from soap afflictions — low budgets, on-camera gaffs and erratic acting — it scored with its complex and fascinating characters, imaginative plots and surprisingly genuine chills. Resurrected briefly in the early '90s, producer Dan

Curtis continues his efforts to bring the show back to life in some form. For now however, the original program stands as a testament to television boldness and ingenuity. -PC

## 19 The New Twilight Zone

**CBS 1985 - 89**  
The wonderfully creepy *Grateful Dead* version of the '72 theme music introduced the rebirth of one of TV's greatest series. And even without Rod Serling, the episodes promised to surpass the original. With scripts by the likes of Harlan Ellison and Robert McCammon, directors like Wes Craven and guest stars like Bruce Willis, how could it mess? By being wildly uneven, that's how. After a couple seasons of one hour episodes, it was pared back to a half hour — with old episodes cut-up to fit the new format. Even at its worst, the series introduced bright new talents like J. Michael Straczynski (*Babylon 5*) and Rockne O'Bannon (*Farscape*). -DLS

## 20 Gormenghast

**BBC 2000**  
Canada's Space: The Imagination Station got a co-producing credit on this inspired BBC interpretation of Mervyn Peake's gothic fantasy masterpiece. The 76th Earl of Groan rules over Gormenghast — a vast crumbling castle that serves as an apt metaphor for 20th century Britain. Brilliant casting included Christopher Lee as the butler Flay, Richard Griffiths as the grotesque cook Swelter and equally perfect choices for the rest of the eccentric characters with names like Dr. Pruneequalor and Nanny Slagg. It is the story of a ruthless kitchenboy named Steerpike who rises to the pinnacle of power in a disintegrating empire. Currently a four part mini-series. -DLS

**21 G vs. E**  
**Sci Fi Channel 1999 - 2000**  
Often described as "*Futurama* meets *The X-Files*," *G vs. E* (a.k.a. Good vs. Evil) tells the tale of an MIB type organization known as The Corps, which specializes in getting people to "renounce their Faustian bargains," and subverting the activities of demons who work their evil disguised as members of human society. *G vs. E* is a very funny show, often parodying the '70s with the main characters' various fashion statements, as well as the visual style of the show itself, which definitely seems to come from the same period of nostalgia that inspired *Tarantino*. -RB

## 22 The Hilarious House of Frightenstein

**CHCH 1971 - 72**  
The psychedelic silhouettes of Igor and the Wolfman playing air guitar to the Stones' 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' lingers like the smell of burnt toast. *The Hilarious House of Fright-*

*enstein*, a Canadian made-for-cable mock horror spoof played out like a demented SGTV skit and starred the talented Billy Van in which he played almost every character (The Gorilla, Gzelsa, The Librarian, The Maharishi, The Oracle, Dr. Pet Vet, The Singing Soldier, The Wolfman and The Count). He created a kid's show that was spooky, educational, and filled with more puns and gags than a whoope cushion. An over-the-top campy opening and closing spots with great theme music and an appearance from Vincent Price made this show a really early (6 am) Saturday morning classic. -GP

## THE WORST

### The Crow: Stairway To Heaven

**1998 - 2000**  
The continual mistreatment of an overrated idea reaches an apex in this awful TV series. *The Crow* managed to waste the underrated Mark Dacascos (*Boogie Boy*) and completely miss the boat on what was the whole point of character Eric Draven (Draven - get it? D-RAVEN): avenge the death of himself and his girlfriend to spend a happy afterlife together. What we had instead was the *Walker Texas Ranger* of the pseudo-Goth set — an undead avenger solving the latest by-the-numbers crime that was torn from the *A-Team* handbook. Dull, tedious, and way too sunny for its own good, *The Crow* on TV amounts to little more than a toothless bastardization of a great concept. -BA

### The New Addams Family

**1999 - current**  
There is no reason for this show to exist. The gags are lame, the delivery is flat and the acting is half-hearted. An overemphasis on make-up, CGI and set design only indicates that the money is going in all the wrong places. The original series may have been a poor man's *Munsters*, but this new one is charming and tedious and makes Joan Rivers look downright innovative. -JWB

### Angel

**Warner Bros. 1999 - current**  
*Enos Attenti* A "S'HT" *Joanne Loves Chachirto* ultra hip bloodsuckers. This *Buffy* spin-off took more-sombre-than-thou-vampire-with-a-conscience *Angelus* and valley girl Cordelia Chase away from Sunnydale and dropped them into the mean streets of LA. So far, it's been one dull note sustained for twenty-two episodes. Some people like it better than the parent series, while others hate it even more. We fit in the latter category and liked it better when it was called *Forever Knight*. -BA, JOB and RG



# Dreadlines.

News Highlights  Honor Happenings

## German fables make dark spectacle

Those of you who appreciated our story on horrific fairy tales (He's Coming To Get You! - RM#10) will definitely want to check out the theatre production *Shockheaded Peter* as it continues its critically acclaimed run across the US. Calling itself a "Junk Opera," *Shockheaded Peter* mixes grotesque with humour in depicting some of the bloody children's stories from Heinrich Hoffmann's classic book, *Struwwelpeter*, originally published in 1845. The difference here is that this play is obviously for the adults who delight in the nastiness of the stories. Like the one of Fidgety Phil who can't sit still and snags himself on the tablecloth, only to be and impaled by the falling cutlery. Cruel Frederick "throws kittens down the stairs" and gets his comeuppance when Trey, the dog he so loves to torture, tears a strip off his leg. Harriet plays with matches until she sets herself on fire and Conrad can't seem to stop sucking his thumb, until the long-legged scissor man chops them off.

Working in cabaret style vignettes with grim puppets, overpainted performers, a Victorian toy theatre of dark, disjointed corridors and a live band, *Shockheaded Peter* is a darkly humorous piece Andrew Lloyd

Webber wishes he had the talent to put together. Red handkerchiefs spurt from Conrad's stumps, Harriet goes up in smoke as her dress becomes fiery red, and the monstrous little *Shockheaded Peter* is buried under the boards of his house, only to be unearthed as a giant boy with wild unkempt hair and ghostly claw-like hands.

Theatre goes wild find more than a touch of Monty Python in this British production, from macabre emcee (Julian Bleach) who viciously swipes his cane in the air during a chilling nightmare sequence, only to reveal himself as a failed performer, to the darkly bizarre cabaret band The Tiger Lillies, whose shrill songs linger long after the decrepit stage



*Shockheaded Peter*: Julian Bleach as the macabre emcee and (right) The Tiger Lillies.

theatre has shut up its many doors.

Look for *Shockheaded Peter* as it winds its North American tour through Los Angeles and San Francisco throughout the month of July.

-Emma Anderson

## Anchor Bay unleashes sleaze classics

Sleaze fiends, rejoice! Anchor Bay has announced the re-release this June of the notorious *Ilsa: She-Wolf of the SS* (1974) and two of its three sequels, *Ilsa: Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks* (1975) and *Ilsa The Wicked Warden* (1977). The oft-banned original (filmed surreptitiously on the set of

*Hogan's Heroes*) may have caused less controversy in '74 than *The Exorcist*, but it remains one of the most popular - and reviled - films of its era.

Anchor Bay's VP of Acquisitions, Jay Douglas, told *Rue Morgue* that the *Ilsa* films rank "among the most sought-after guilty pleasures," adding that "the Internet's a buzz and the preorders have been great, which we expected because there's a huge cult following."

Rights to *Ilsa: Tigress of Siberia* (1976) remain tied up elsewhere, although Douglas maintains that Anchor Bay is hoping to acquire it eventually.

Both VHS and DVD copies of the three releases are reformatted to the correct aspect ratio (1:66:1) and digitally remastered, and the DVD will feature commentary from star Dyanne Thorne and various others. A Canadian release date has yet to be announced.



# Dreadlines.

## Gauntlet publisher tackles censorship issues

Barry Hoffman initially made his reputation in the horror field as editor of *Gauntlet*, a highly respected small press anti-censorship magazine that has featured stories and articles by such well known names as Harlan Ellison, Stephen King and Ray Bradbury. So it was ironic when he recently found himself at the bad end of a censorship issue.

Hoffman, author of the dark thriller *Born Bad* (see RM#14), was scheduled to appear at the University of Pennsylvania Bookstore for a book signing and discussion. But University officials pulled the plug on the event due to "the sensitive nature of the topics covered in the book."

"Rather than use a discussion of *Born Bad* to educate students about suicide," commented the disgruntled author, "the University chose to make believe the problem doesn't exist by cancelling the event."

*Born Bad* deals with a rash of apparent suicides on the UPENN campus, which are in fact orchestrated by a student who enjoys manipulating others into taking their lives. Hoffman says he conducted a great deal of research before writing his novel, making sure to get the details of campus life correct and to deal with the topic of suicide in a sensitive manner. In fact, he even changed the structure of the book when he discovered how cooperative and effective the campus police were.

Hoffman maintains that his talk was not censored because of the book's horror content, but rather because it dealt with the issue of suicide on campus, which the university was uncomfortable about dealing with in a public forum. He says that, contrary to popular belief, the horror genre has never been the target of much censorship.

"Not even extreme writers like Jack Ketchum and Ed Lee have been censored as far as I know," Hoffman told *Rue Morgue*.

Hoffman's books include his "eyes" series — *Hungry Eyes*, *Eyes of Prey* and his latest, *Judas Eyes* (forthcoming from Gargadillo Publications), all of which deal, almost obsessively, with the topics of rape and sexual assault. But that aspect of the books has yet to cause any trouble.

"Actually, I was surprised to find my novels in K-Mart, which is notoriously conservative," he says.

Although Hoffman resists labels of all kinds, he refers to his first novel, *Hungry Eyes*, as psychological or reality-based horror. He says he kept the series fresh partly by shifting towards supernatural horror with each subsequent book and partly by letting his characters grow. Sbara, the main character of *Hungry Eyes* begins the series as a rape victim, metamorphoses into a serial killer and by the end of the third book, she becomes the protagonist, tracking down another female serial killer.

## JUDAS EYES



*Judas Eyes: New from Hoffman*

"I view all my protagonists as flawed and antagonists as complex shades of grey," says Hoffman. "That's how it is in the real world."

Hoffman has certainly brought his fair share of horror into the real world. One offshoot of *Gauntlet Magazine* is Gauntlet Press, which publishes reprints of books by some of the world's favourite horror authors, including Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch and Ray Bradbury. The most recent release from Gauntlet Press is Poppy Z. Brite's collection *Are You Lonesome Tonight?*. A complete catalogue of Gauntlet issues, Gauntlet Press publications and Barry Hoffman's own books is available on the Gauntlet Press website at [www.gauntletpress.com](http://www.gauntletpress.com)

—Dale L. Sproule

## Chiller Theatre April 13 – 17, 2000

New Jersey — They don't call it Chiller for nothing, folks, and what a show it was! Your faithful *Rue Morgue* contingent landed in Jersey this past April 13 to give you the goods on the premiere horror happening in the US. The place was packed with all the hard horror fans, casual onlookers, celebs and would-be celebs (was that G.G. Allen's brother walking by?) packed into the second floor of the Sheraton Hotel.

Everything was up for grabs; from movies to movie memorabilia, fangs to trinkets, dolls, jackets, new and used comics, magazines and original art. Saturday afternoon, we were invited to an intimate soiree, where we drank beer and ate pizza courtesy of the folks at Gauntlet Press, who were celebrating upcoming

releases from their latest find, Jack Ketchum. There, we ran into E. Paul Wilson and exchanged some words with Doug (Cutting Moments) Buck.

Also on hand at the main tent was the ubiquitous Linda Blair (who had no shortage of fans at her table), Camille (I Spit On Your Grave) Keaton, and even the incredible Hulk himself, Lou Ferrigno. Meanwhile, back at the show we had the opportunity to chat with Tom Savini, Basil Gogos, Bernie Wrightson, Jerry Only from The Misfits and some of the guys from from Troma.

Speaking of Troma, we also took the opportunity to drop in on their studios located in the heart of Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan. Right off the bat we were "Tro-

mized" by the colourful cast of miscreants who have a run of the place. Troma pres Lloyd Kaufman gave us the royal tour, showered us with gifts, took us into the editing suite of the upcoming *Citizen Toxie* movie and — in true Troma style — even let us snap a picture of him taking a piss.

This report wouldn't be complete without a hats off to our tour guides across the Big Apple and surrounding area; John and Steve DiRenzo, two of the coolest guys from NY who were kind enough to show us the sights in Steve's bitchin' Monte Carlo.

Those who missed the show may want to book early for Chiller's Halloween show in October. We'll see you there!

# What's Brooding...

with *Vulvaria Wick* and *Mitch Davis*

**NIGHT OF THE BLOODSUCKING DEAD** Legendary horror director, George Romero is slated to write and direct the indie vampire thriller, *The Ill*, for P.Kino Films. The film tells the tale of a young college student who falls for a beautiful exchange student with a dangerous secret. Judging from the title, it seems Romero may be up to his old tricks again. If vampirism is a disease, I wonder what it does to the flesh?

**BLACKER STILL** Miramax and Dimension Films have signed *Pitch Black* writer/director, David Twohy, to write and direct *Proteus*, a film that is being described as 'Das Boot meets *The Shining*.' *Proteus* follows the crew of a haunted submarine in World War II, stuck in enemy waters, they have to fight the Nazi destroyers from above, as well as the ghosts that lurk down below. Hmm, sounds a little like that old Lovecraft story *The Tomb*, doesn't it? Darren Aronofsky was originally lined up to helm the film, based on a story by Aronofsky and Lucius Sassman, but he has since moved on to role of producer.

**MORE INDEE HORROR!** Montrealer Elza Kephart has begun production on *Graveyard Alive*, a low budget, feature length 35mm comedy-horror, set to inject some interesting gender politics into the realm of the undead. The film documents a timid nurse's evolution into an aggressive - albeit living-dead - sex kitten. Infected after getting a bit too intimate with a gore soaked patient, Nurse Patsy (Anne Day-Jones) develops a newfound sense of confidence, and begins terrorizing a rival nurse who stole her boyfriend years ago. In spite of responsibly scoring the bulk of her flesh from the basement morgue, it doesn't take long before her undead infection begins spreading throughout the hospital. Kephart is shooting it as a silent film, in black & white, complete with intertitles, with a view to giving it aesthetics that mix 1920's German Expressionism with 1960's American Exploitation. She's pulling it all together with the help of co-writer/biologist-turned-producer (!) Patricia Gomez, and co-producer Andrea Stark. For more info, check out:

[www.vif.com/users/elza/graveyardalive.htm](http://www.vif.com/users/elza/graveyardalive.htm).

**POOR LITTLE DEAD GIRL** Roman Dirge's popular comic book series *Lenore* is currently being adapted for an animated film. Sony Family Entertainment has acquired the rights and has lined up Caroline Thompson (*A Nightmare Before Christmas*) and Larry Wilson (*Beetlejuice*) to work on the script. The comic follows the morbid adventures of a sweet little dead girl who returns from the beyond because she feels her family needs her. In explaining the film's appeal for both children and adults, Thompson alludes to one of many graphic, yet touchingly innocent episodes in *Lenore*'s life: "For example, she tries to help out by taking the neighbor's baby to the park. While she feeds the bird, the baby whines and she says, 'Oh, you want to feed them.' She puts the feed on the baby, and the bird starts pecking away." In the comic, the baby's brains were gouged out; however, in the film, the babe will only suffer a few non-life-threatening holes in the head. ☹



**Want to see something  
REALLY scary?**

Columbia Pictures and  
Rue Morgue Magazine  
want to send YOU to see  
Paul Verhoeven's  
**HOLLOW MAN**

Be among the first 50 people to  
e-mail the correct answer to the following  
question to [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com)  
and WIN passes for two!  
(Subject to Classification)

**WHO DIRECTED THE 1933 THRILLER  
THE INVISIBLE MAN?**

EVIN BACON ELISABETH SHUE

**HOLLOW MAN**

WHEN YOU SEE IT, YOU'LL THINK AGAIN.

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**IN THEATRES AUGUST 4**

## "DINNER'S READY!"



## THE GORE/MET

**Blood Feast** Starring Connie Mason, Thomas Wood and Mal Arnold; Directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis; Written by Allison Louise Downe.  
Something Weird Video

*The Andy Griffith Show* meets *Maniac* in the world's first splatter film, a mix of disturbing violence and arch-camp performances. Exotic caterer Fund Ramses, assayed in a sub-Lagosi turn by Mal Arnold, gathers body parts from nubile young women for a special feast; a blood feast, to resurrect the ancient Egyptian goddess Ishtar.

Fund cuts off legs, cut out tongues, and hacks out brains to Lewis' Spartan symphony score, the camera lingering lovingly over the carnage. Fund eyes the daughter of the town socialite as the final piece in his flesh puzzle and plans to use her birthday party for his final feast, and you won't want to miss it! Prime fromage and requisite viewing for gorehounds.



**Two Thousand Maniacs** Starring Connie Mason, Thomas Wood, Jeffrey Miller; Written and directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis.  
Something Weird Video

The South will rise again, and hack up Yankees for barbecue! The redneck residents of Pleasant Valley, population 2000, covertly divert tourists from the "Land of Lincoln" off the main highway and into their burg for a centennial celebration. The six wary Yankees are made guests of the seemingly kind townsfolk, the occasion being commemorated never made clear.

The true nature of the festivities become woefully apparent to the unwitting travelers as they are separated and subjected to decidedly demented and deadly picnic games, including a roll down a hill in a barrel with nails hammered into the sides and a reverse dunk tank that drops an enormous boulder on the hapless victim strapped underneath.

Of the three films in the trilogy this is the most accessible and entertaining, with fluid gore scenes, restrained and earnest performances, and a well-paced plot. Yee-haw, a shit kickin' good time!

One of the most influential, groundbreaking and ignored directors to work in the horror genre is Herschell Gordon Lewis. Lewis began his career in 1960, making a string of "nudie cuties," softcore sexploitation films, before moving to a genre unknown in 1963: the gore film. He worked steadily behind the camera for the next nine years before retiring to become a highly successful advertising executive and author of over 20 texts on marketing. Although he never made a film again, Lewis left an indelible stamp on the genre, paving the way for the depiction of graphic gore in all films to follow. His first three horror films comprise his Blood Trilogy, recently released on DVD by Something Weird Video. This issue we rip off the band-aid and look at these three significant re-issues.

## MENU OF THE MACABRE



*Two Thousand Maniacs* a barrel of laughs

**Color Me Blood Red** Starring Don Joseph, Candi Conder, Elyn Warner; Written and directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis.  
Something Weird Video

Adam Seng, played by a wickedly bitter Don Joseph, is a frustrated artist turning out paintings that don't sell. In a fit of pique he uses his blood on a new painting, inadvertently creating an art sensation! When he can't squeeze any more blood out of his sliced up fingers he looks for a new source of red, starting with his shrewish girlfriend. As the demand for his paintings grow, so does the body-count. Despite having the least outrageous plot of the three films *Color Me Blood Red* is the campiest of the lot, featuring some of the most painfully hip dialogue to ever grate your ears. "Holy bananas, it's a girls leg!" Groovy stuff!

All three DVDs are remastered, feature secondary audio commentary by Lewis and producer David Friedman, and include original theatrical trailers and stills galleries.





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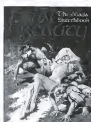
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A cover painting by Joseph Linner marks this collection of women-magicians and their dragon contacts



## MORMAKS

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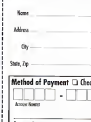
## MORMAKS VOLUME 1

A GALLERY GIRLS BOOK  
Girls of the sea, as seen by such artists as Giondo, Hoffman, Byrd, and others. Wrap-around cover painting by Joe Chiodo



## SOPHRORESS

A cover painting by Joseph Linner marks this collection of women-magicians and their dragon contacts



## SOPHRORESS VOLUME 1

A cover painting by Joseph Linner marks this collection of women-magicians and their dragon contacts



## SOPHRORESS VOLUME 1

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# TERROR HAS BIG EYES

鬼眼 RECENTLY RECEIVED ANIME

BY DONALD SIMMONS

## OGRE SLAYER

Viz Video • Two 30 min. episodes  
English Language

Our hero, known only as the "Ogre Slayer," has a problem. As the spawn of a human mother and ogre father, he's a member of neither world. In a true act of half-breed angst, he decides to become fully human by wiping out dad's side of the family with his kick-ass powers and a big sword. He's got his work cut out for him.

The first episode features Moyko, a lucky but unpopular schoolgirl. It turns out that those unfortunate to be around

her fall prey to accidents that she somehow avoids. Virtually friendless and surrounded by hostility, matters come to a head when her "victims" decide to avenge themselves. Moyko literally gives birth to two unstoppable ogre "protectors," whose idea of defense involves decapitation.

In the second episode, a reporter is hot on Slayer's trail. She delves into a series of brutal attacks (with a friend as one of the victims) centered around

OGRE

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old temples, and teams of a plot to resurrect an ancient ogre, which the Slayer himself seems to be part of!

The climactic fights, while fluidly and gorgeously done, actually come out second to the character interaction. The Slayer is your typical gym out-cast and we learn little of him, but Moyko's desperation to fit in with her peers — as well as the reporter's striving to learn her friend's ultimate fate and Slayer's true identity — work remarkably well. Decent voice acting rounds off a series with some good stories and non-happy endings.

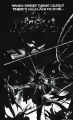


## WICKED CITY

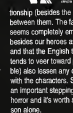
Urban Vision  
30 min./English Language

*Wicked City* takes an odd line between graphic horror (of which there is plenty), soft-core sex (ditto) and outright sentimentality. Here, it's time to renegotiate the treaties between Earth and The Black World, a demon-inhabited parallel dimension. Taki, a human special agent, has a very close encounter with a female demon, and is then partnered with Makia, another female Black Worlder. They're assigned to protect a key (and foul-mouthed) dignitary from demon rebels aiming to destroy the peace and humankind, although it seems some other force may be protecting them as well, and their assignment is more than it appears.

Originally released in 1987, *Wicked City* contains several nightmarish sequences of demon transformations and battles which won it cult status. The look of the movie is quite dark and stylish, and has a



film-noir feel throughout, but the plot and characters remain at arms-length. Taki and Makia are both so cool they border on cold, and it's difficult to see any real relationship (besides the physical) developing between them. The facts that Tokyo seems completely empty of anyone besides our heroes and their enemies, and that the English translation is flat (and tends to veer toward psychic technobabble) also lessen any connections we feel with the characters. Still, *Wicked City* is an important stepping-stone for anime horror and it's worth seeing for that reason alone.



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## PERFECT BLUE

Manga Entertainment  
100 min./English Language

Mima's a struggling singer in an all-girl trio who decides to leave her limited success behind her and become an actress, breaking her "cute-girl" image by landing a small role in an intense ongoing murder drama. This disturbs two people: a stalker and Mima herself, both of whom dislike what she's asked to do to change her career (nude photos anyone?). And when those around her begin turning up brutally slaughtered in the style of the show, it's anyone's guess who's actually responsible.

Equal parts Alfred Hitchcock and *Jacob's Ladder*, *Perfect Blue* is just about perfect, one of the best psychological horror films I've ever seen, period. As Mima tries to adjust from being a candy-coated idol singer to acting in violent gang-rape scenes, her sense of reality — and that of the audience — gradually becomes completely unraveled. The filmmakers masterfully mix three different worlds (Mima's, "reality", and the TV show) so that the viewer is never sure which world is on screen at any given time, and is always surprised by the revelation.

Wonderfully realistic animation (done by Koreans) includes Asians who actually look Asian. The voice acting could have used some more work, but that's a quibble. And the ending makes perfect sense to boot. Run, don't walk, and find a copy.



## SILENT MOBIUS VOL. 3

Anime Village  
50 min./English Subtitled

It's 2023, and Tokyo is under siege by the supernatural. Whenever the demons, here called Lucifer Hawks, appear, it's up to the girls of the Attacked Mystification Police (AMP) to do battle. The city's first line of paranormal defense, the AMP is an all-female (there's a surprise) paranormal power squad associated with — and barely tolerated by — the regular cops.



*Silent Mobius* is based on a best-selling manga (5 million copies in print), and is best appreciated as a continuing series, rather than as a collection of stand-alone episodes. The first episode of this volume is a light-hearted break from the main action as the AMP (after stepping on the toes of the investigations squad) try to mend fences with the regular cops by throwing a party to apologize. Of course the Hawks have other ideas.

In the second episode the grim tone of the

series returns full force with the back story of Kitty, the team's mysterious powerhouse, and her awkward, head-butting relationship with another detective, which may be her undoing once a killer android from her past returns to finish the job he once started.

While these episodes aren't bad, there's nothing in them that really stands out either. If you're enjoying the series already you'll like them. Otherwise there's plenty of other stuff to watch.

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## X

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FROM DIRECTOR MAMORU OSHII  
(Ghost In The Shell)

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## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, TWENTY-FIVE FEET

**Jaws** \*DVD\*

Starring Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw and Richard Dreyfus

Written by Peter Benchley and Carl Gottlieb

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Universal Home Video

The premise was deceptively simple – a 25-foot man-eating Great White Shark menaces a New England tourist community. With the summer tourist season (and lives) at stake, the town's police chief (Scheider), a marine biologist (Dreyfus) and a crusty fisherman (Shaw) set out into the Atlantic to do battle with the beast, Ahab style. What resulted was one of the greatest thrillers of the 1970s, and one of the most successful films ever.

If you haven't seen *Jaws* recently, I would implore you to do so – I myself had forgotten just how great a movie it is. Ironically, what could be Spielberg's finest film (alongside *CE3K* and *Raiders* IMHO) was a hellish shoot (to put it mildly), that went massively over budget and schedule.

You'll get a lot of the back story on this DVD; it features exclusive footage, behind-the-scenes and outtakes, deleted scenes, archives, trailers, a screen-saver, "Get Out of the Water" trivia game, and assorted other goodies – all but a piece of the big fish itself.

Maybe the hoopla is justified. After all,

*Jaws* ushered in the era of the blockbuster summer film, still the driving force of cinema today. Ironically, the film still rises above most blockbusters by presenting us with characters we actually care about. The interplay between the three leads is unmatched, and Shaw's story of his first experience with the man-eaters still sends chills up the spine.

Spielberg's decision to keep the shark under wraps for nearly all of the film (motivated by the mechanical beast's shoddy design) instills a pervading sense of dread that has been imitated often, but never as successfully. With the ocean visible in nearly every shot, Spielberg must have realized that he didn't need to focus on the shark to evoke its presence.

This twenty-fifth anniversary release is apparently the first in a long line of Spielberg's movies coming to DVD. Younger fans may be wetting their pants for the director's later titles, but no one should underestimate this one. It's still that good.

—Brad Abraham



**TIDHLE:** Low budget, lots of attitude.

## ZOMBIE STYLE

**The Dead Hate The Living!**

Starring Eric Clawson, Jamie Donahue,

and Brett Beardslee

Written and directed by Dave Parker

Full Moon Releasing

Charles Band's Full Moon Pictures has been a staple of straight-to-video teen (or pre-teen) horror for years, but nothing since the dubious *Puppet Master* series has received the push that this particular title has. I was as skeptical as the next guy experienced in Full Moon fare (i.e. *Shrunken Heads*, *Trancers*, etc.) but was surprised to find *The Dead Hate the Living!* an energetic



and well-crafted film, and an enjoyable throwback to the '80s horror comedy of Dan O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead*.

Here, two young men – a director and an effects artist – share common goals and aspirations. Both are obsessed with the likes of Lucio Fulci, and both are desperate to get their first film off the ground. Together with a crew of upstarts, the duo break into a hospital one night to film a low budget zombie feature.

Stumbling across a real corpse (and Rob Zombie look-alike), the crew is faced with a dilemma: if they report the body, it may mean the end of their project. If they don't, well, never mind, because they go ahead and actually use it as a prop in their movie. It doesn't take long for the body to spring to life, and thus begins the familiar zombies-run-amok scenario with a twist: it turns out that the reanimated body is a Dr. Eibon, a mad, undead scientist who ushers in hordes of decaying automobiles from a portal to a hell that resembles Fulci's *The Beyond*.

For the most part, *TDHITL* is a really cool film. Director Parker shows a love for the genre, and more importantly, an appreciation for all the horror fans and the films on which we grew up. In fact, it's almost shameless how much referencing goes down; from Romero and Savini to Edgar Allan Poe and Bruce Campbell. (Gore-met will be pleased to note that Fulci's mock tombstone has the correct year of his birth: 1927.) It's a truly magic moment when Eibon proclaims: "make them die slowly!"

While the film is fairly light entertainment, there are some interesting scenarios; makeup artist Paul (Beardsbee) must doll himself and director Dave (Claws) in zombie attire, in order to sneak past their foes. The gore factor is at least average, but a climactic chainsaw fight on a graveyard set is disappointing-by dry.

One point worth mentioning, however, is that it seems the real-life crew of this film felt *The Dead Hate the Living!* to be in the vein of Italian horror maestro Dario Argento. Sorry, but this film has about as much to do with the giallo as Swedish black metal has to do with the Grummys. On the other hand, *The Dead Hate the Living!* uses enough witty humor and infectious comic book fun to create a potent new entry into the world of the living dead.

-Aaron Lupton

## THE SAME STORY

### The 4th Floor

Starring Juliette Lewis, William Hurt and Shelley Duvall

Written and directed by Josh Klausner  
Lion's Gate Films

Hoo boy, will you take a look at those names? Juliette Lewis (*Kalifornia*, *Natural Born Killers*, *From Dusk Till Dawn* – can it get any better?), William Hurt (*Altered States*) Hurt and Shelley "Jack, stop it!" Duvall. With that kind of star power, you'd think *The 4th Floor* would be a top level scare fest.

What we have here, in fact, are some big names lining a mainstream fright film about the freaky neighbour no one sees, but who somehow manages to torment new resident Jane Fennel (Lewis remarkably ditching her trailer park psycho routine to play a respected member of society). It happens that Jane has moved into her late mother's apartment, contrary to the wishes of her boyfriend (Hurt), who also happens to be the local TV weatherman. With Duvall playing the landlord in slippers and the fourth floor neighbour a glass eye on a door (a little like Hal from 2001), we have an escalating series of "incidents" which culminate – logically at any rate – in "an experience of terror."



*The 4th Floor*: mid-budget mid-scares.

Crossover fans may like and even respect *The 4th Floor* for its cast of high paid actors and its glossy production, but the horror de-hards will see through this thing in a New York minute. Director Josh Klausner resorts to a series of by the book thrills; a mouse infestation, threatening messages taped to the banister and the occasional "accident," but the visual and dialogue cues are way too obvious for the surprise to come as anything resembling a surprise. Except for maybe the last frame.

*The 4th Floor* isn't quite what I expected but, then again, I no longer have the stamina to walk through a by-the-numbers thriller

## DEAD AND CONFUSED

### Stop It, You're Killing Me

Starring Jamie Donahue, Jessica Beckwith and James Black Jr.  
Directed by Kenneth Yakkel  
Written by Todd Luck  
Haxan Entertainment

I'm often frustrated when I come across the term "unseen" in a film review, because it's seldom followed by an adequate explanation. Good script/bad acting? Good acting/bad direction? One leg longer than the other? Or WHAT?

Nonetheless, I pretty much have to apply that very word to *Stop It, You're Killing Me*, since this indie effort has many strikes against it but is still well worth checking out. It's extremely talkie and convoluted as hell, an urban horror-comedy concerning a sorceress, a 112 year-old millionaire (who still has to have it several times a day), his scheming wife, her beefy boyfriend and a flamboyantly gay zombie. Still with me?

Director Yakkel and writer Luck don't seem to be able to untangle this snarled narrative thread, but they do their best to show the viewer a good time. The moments of genuine suspense – when they happen – are well-executed and for every joke that falls flat there are two that'll have you howling (the "Hitler's First Kiss" mail order figurines are the stuff of truly twisted geniuses). There's a Trocena sensibility at work here, although the campiness never quite steps over the line into slapstick comedy; it's more like a series of sly winks.

Featuring music by GWAR and Phantasm's Reggie Bannister.

-John W. Bowen



with all of my "oohs" and "aahs" intact. Thrillers and horror films are as old as the hills; if you know anything about them (and I suspect you do if you're reading this magazine), then you'll know that it requires a great deal of audacity or stupidity to serve up the same old thing and act like it's something startlingly new.

-Emma Anderson

## PANNING MR. MEDIOCRITY

### Killing Mr. Griffin

Starring Scott Bairstow, Amy Jo

Johnson and Mario Lopez

Directed by Jack Bender

Written by Michael Angeli and

Kathleen Rowell

Based on the novel by Lois Duncan

Students kidnap a hated teacher and mayhem ensues. It's called *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, and it starred Katie Holmes, a better piece of ass than any that appeared in this film (except perhaps Jay Thomas in a particularly vile performance as Griffin). Apparently the author of *Killing* was too busy coming up with original plot ideas for the next installment of *I Know What You Did Last Summer* to realize that this movie had



already been made under another title:

A group of students led by a guy running for School Council President (Bairstow) decide that the only way they can top a Columbine-esque paintball-shooting-spreed prank they pull in the opening scene, is to kidnap their English teacher and then triumphantly return him on the day of elections. They're surprised when their carefully crafted plan goes awry.

The film has production values. It also has the same sassy teens and the same almost complete lack of violence, gore or suspense that you can find on prime-time television any night of the week. On the rare occasions when it rises above worn clichés, the dialogue manages to sound authentic, and the young actors' performances are competent.

Jay Thomas (Mr. Griffin) does the best he can with what he's given. Unfortunately, a plot devoid of an original thought, the lack of violence (and complete lack of nudity), and a dodgy script left this group of Gen-Y-ers stumbling through a film ad-libbed with the tired teen angst we all remember from our own youth: "What if I don't get

into an Ivy League school? What if my girlfriend who's destined to appear in *Playboy* finds out about my other girlfriend who's destined to appear in *Penthouse*? Where do I bury my teacher?"

As an after-school special, the movie is passable, although I'm sure the PTA wouldn't like the references to cafeteria massacres by machine-gun wielding teens. As a horror film, this schlock has less edge than that episode of *Party of Five* when Bairstow, as Julia's abusive boyfriend, is confronted by Julia's husband - wasn't he also named Griffin?

-Eric Spurling

## LAST GASP

### The Last Stop

Starring Adam Beach, Rose McGowan

and Jurgen Prochnow

Directed by Mark Malone

Written by Bart Sumner

Leon's Gate Films

Using the same crime-and-incident-weather archetype that made *Hard Rain* such a blast (cringe before the sarcasm), *The Last Stop* is in many ways an even weaker example of an attempt to dress up a fairly conventional murder-suspense type of flick before the visual backdrop of an external hazard (in this case, a blizzard). The story follows Jason, a Colorado State Trooper who takes refuge from a blizzard in a remote mountain lodge where the only patrons are a group of edgy, hostile people who hate each other and all have something to hide. Jason comes across a murder and a shitload of money, and since nobody's going anywhere, things (theoretically) get intense. The problem is that all the characters' motivations appear to change so quickly that one never comes to believe in, or identify with any of them because they seem shocked into the plot.

There is also this annoying array of irrelevant subplots that attempt to be heartwarming or dramatic but just come off as dopey. The owner of the inn, a German guy named Fritz (cliche character alert), has this relationship with his American wife and their autistic son that is painfully corny. Similarly, the relationship between Jason and his ex-lover ends in a completely over-the-top ridiculous attempt at Shakespearean tragedy. All of this comes as evidence that someone did care about this project and did want to serve up a powerful or emotional experience, but they just had no idea where to start. The result is a dark drama with a bunch of implausible elements.

-Roland Brown



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## FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, LLOYD

### Legend of the Chupacabra

Starring Katsy Joiner, Stan McKinney and J.T. Trevino

Directed by Joe Castro

Written by Mark Stephens and Rudi Bali

Troma Team Video

Oh man, this is gonna be awkward. *RM* staffers think of me as some kind of Troma groupie, and it's easy to see why; since starting at this mag last year I've fawned over various Troma releases in print, dominated Lloyd Kaufman for pope and referred to him as The Dad I Never Had. And Kaufman has expressed his gratitude in no uncertain terms, sending me autographed posters, T-shirts and quoting my review on the poster for *Terror Firmer*.

And now, the moment I've been dreading: I've just seen a really shitty new release from Troma. Do I compromise my hitherto impeccable journalistic ideals and sully our best issue to date by lying to you, gentle reader? Or do I risk stemming the flow of free promo items from Troma by telling it like it is? As P.G. Wodehouse said, these are the times that try men's souls....

Perhaps I could dance around the issue by saying that *Legend of the Chupacabra* is a low-budget parody of *The Blair Witch Project*, "cause that much is true. "In 1997, three cryptozoology students ventured into Santa Maria, Texas to make a documentary... a year later they finished it." Okay, that's kinda cute. Of course, I'd have to avoid mentioning that at some point after the first twenty minutes the film decides to start taking itself very seriously, and that ain't a good thing at all. And if I let that much slip, I'd have to tell you how silly the monster looks, and explain that while these people are supposed to be deep in the wilderness you can actually hear traffic noises in the background.

Another option would be to try and distract you with a dissertation on the mythical Chupacabra, a creature described in Mexican folklore as a bloodsucking demon that decimates livestock by moonlight (the name liter-

ally translates as "goat sucker"). Problem is, somebody else already did an article on it back in *RM*#10.

A last resort would be to assure you that this film is merely a pickup - Troma is distributing it, but it's not one of their in-house productions (in case the lack of nudity wasn't a dead giveaway).

Regardless, my cover must be pretty much blown by now. I will keep telling myself that Lloyd won't hold this against me. Lloyd is a man of high ideals who would prefer an honest opinion - even an unflattering one - to blatant sycophancy. Lloyd is fair-minded. Lloyd is kind-hearted. Lloyd will continue to send promo items, like maybe a *Terror Firmer* shirt. Lloyd will get Alice Latourelle to call me. Lloyd will forgive me for saying that *Legend of the Chupacabra* sucks goats.

-John W. Bowen

## UNSAFE SEX

### Killer Condom "DVD"

Starring Udo Samel and Peter Lohmeyer

Written by Ralf König and Martin Walz

Directed by Martin Walz

Troma Team

Strange things are afoot at the Hotel Quickie, and it has nothing to do with the ex-cop transvestite lounge singer in the lobby or the fact that everyone in New York City is speaking German. It seems a few of the hotel's virtually all-male clientele are getting their wedding tackle marched off by the titular carnivorous mutant prophylactic. Enter Detective Luigi Mackeroni (Samel), your typical movie hero: a fat, openly-gay chain smoker, possessed of a gargantuan sex organ ("exactly 32 centimetres!") and looking like Bob Hoskins after a three-day bender in memory of Oliver Reed. But after the

latex knob-gobbler makes off with our hero's right testicle and his young lover is framed for the dirty deed, things get *personal*.

Adapted from co-writer König's delightfully rude underground comic book *Kondom des Grauens*, Walz has fashioned a film that is equally delightful, equally rude and a more sensitive portrayal of the gay experience ("I want to be tolerated, accepted and understood!") than can be found in Joel Schumacher and Gus Van Sant's combined filmographies.

Walz joins special effects designer Jörg Büttgerit (director of *Schramm* and *Nekromantik*) for an entertaining, insightful and slightly inebriated commentary track (What is it with Troma and drunken audio commentary, anyway? Between this and *Cannibal! The Musical*, you'd think they were trying to find a way to write off their alcohol supply -

John Bowen please take note), covering topics from the cleaning-up of New York (the film opens with what Walz claims is "the last shot of the pre-Disney Times Square") to the limited (but nonetheless highly-publicized) participation of "creative consultant" Hansruedi Giger (by the time the producers had worked out Giger's contract, much of Büttgerit's effects work had been completed!).

Troma deserves praise for not only acquiring such a seemingly-uncommercial picture, but for releasing it uncut and in its original German language version. It's nice to see an independent company that's still willing to take chances, and this one's no exception. A fun, funny live-action cartoon that's more than worth your time.

-Joseph O'Brien





City of the Living Dead: Poe and Lovecraft done Fulci

## REISSUES

### FULCI'S GATES REOPENED

City of the Living Dead "DVD"

Starring Christopher George, Catriona MacColl and Carlo De Mejo

Directed by Lucio Fulci

Written by Lucio Fulci and Dardano Sacchetti

Anchor Bay Entertainment

City of the Living Dead (*Pausa nella città dei morti viventi*) was Italian genre legend Lucio Fulci's follow-up to his smash success *Zombie*, and the second of nine films he made in the four years widely regarded as his halcyon period (1979-83). For his second zombie film, Fulci reunited the core team of *Zombie* collaborators, writer Dardano Sacchetti, director of photography Sergio Salvati, FX maestro Giannetto De Rossi and soundtrack composer Fabio Frizzi, the same crew responsible for his masterpiece *E tu vivrai nel terrore - L'aldilà* (*The Beyond*) three years later.

The plot is a mish-mash of Lovecraft references with a sprinkling of Poe for good measure. A priest hangs himself in a cemetery (Fulci's wonderful exaggerated sound FX shine here, the noise being thrown

over a tree limb sounds like a whip cracking), opening the gates of hell, located in the town of Dunwich. *L'aldilà* star Catriona MacColl and Christopher George, the coolest B-movie actor after John Saxon, move their investigation of strange occurrences from New York to Dunwich as events turn ever more mysterious. Dunwich residents Carlo De Mejo, Antonella Inter-

lenghi, and Janet Agren get caught up in a wave of home-town murder and mayhem and join forces with MacColl and George before the film's climactic zombie assault.

The plot of *City of the Living Dead* is secondary to the gore set pieces that are the film's raison d'être. The most infamous scene involves a young couple (the boyfriend played by future Italian director Michele Soavi) having a romantic interlude interrupted by the zombified priest, his red-rimmed stare causing the young girl to vomit

up her intestinal tract in a disgusting fountain of guts. Giovanni Lombardo Radice, better known as John Morghen, has a lathe drill run through his noggin in the film's most breathtaking gore effect. *City* is often criticized for its lack of plot, but what it lacks in story is made for in atmosphere and terror.

*City of the Living Dead* was released uncut

several times as *The Gates of Hell*, but this is the North American debut of a widescreen print (1.66:1), and has been digitally remastered for optimum picture quality. The theatrical trailer is included as a bonus. A worthy addition to Anchor Bay's Lucio Fulci collection.

-The Gore-met

### BORN TO BE MILD

The Baby "DVD"

Starring Anjanette Comer and David Manay

Directed by Ted Post

Written by Abe Polsky

Image Entertainment

Dysfunctional families have long been ripe territory for horror films, from *Spider Baby's* shut-in Merries to the beleaguered Torrances of *The Shining*, not to mention fringe-dwelling predatory outcasts like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre's* Sawyer boys or *The Hills Have Eyes'* Jupiter family. The Wadsworth clan of *The Baby* are no exception, although it's

### A TALE OF TWO BUDDIES

Horror Express "DVD"

Starring Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing and Telly Savalas

Directed by Eugenio Martin

Written by Arnaud D'Usseau and Julian Halpery

Image Entertainment

Hope and Crosby, Martin and Lewis, Kirk and Spock, film has long embraced the "buddy system" over sends of successive film and television team-ups. Without a doubt, horror's equivalent of these entertainment tag-teams would have to be Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. Famous cinematic antagonists (Lee's Dracula to Cushing's Van Helsing in many of Hammer's finest films), the two team up to fight for the common good in the massively entertaining *Horror Express*. Long a staple of late night television, this new DVD release is a worthy addition for fans of these great performers.

It's 1906 and anthropologist Alexander Saxton (Lee) is accompanying the centuries-old frozen body of a gigantic ape-like man back to England by way of the Orient Express. Of course, it isn't long before the specimen awakens and begins wreaking havoc aboard the train. Saxton's investigation ultimately leads him to ally with rival scientist Dr. Wells (Cushing) to stop this deadly menace, and it is here that the fun really begins.

The greatest thrill in viewing *Horror Express* is watching Lee and Cushing work together. These two great performers clearly enjoyed each other's presence and this fast paced film benefits enormously from their chemistry.

Equally self-deprecating and suspenseful, *Horror Express* overcomes gaps in story logic by ensuring the audience is never bored by the on-screen happenings. With graphic autopsy scenes and a scenery-chewing appearance by Telly Savalas, the story races along like a runaway train, owing as much to Agatha Christie as it does to H.P. Lovecraft.

Unfortunately, Image Entertainment's DVD (part of The Euroshock Collection) lacks any substantial supplements, except for some informative liner notes and filmographies for Lee and Cushing. While the picture quality is somewhat lacking compared to the best Anchor Bay releases, it is the best this film has looked in years - perhaps ever.

-Brad Abraham



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unlikely they'll ever join the ranks of a true world-class Family That Stays Together. Despite the admirably lurid cover art, there really isn't much going on in this "rarely seen '70s cult shocker" that you'd wouldn't find in (in less-ridiculous terms, though no closer to reality) your average movie of the week.

Comer plays a social worker assigned to monitor the Wadsworths, in particular "Baby" (Manzy), a fully-grown man who has not progressed mentally beyond the infant stage. Assuming that Baby's arrested development may have more to do with nurture than nature — a not-unreasonable conclusion considering his mother (Ruth Roman) and sisters (Suzanne Zenor & Mariana Hill) keep Baby in diapers, make him sleep in a giant crib and torture him with cattle prod every time he tries to stand or speak — she makes efforts to liberate him from his surroundings.

This is all fine and good, but it's not in the least bit suspenseful, scary or overly-involv-

ing. The idea of a 37-year-old infant is weird, but Manzy's performance elicits more laughs than sympathy or shocks, and the rest of his family aren't eccentric enough to maintain interest on that level alone — the *Dukes of Hazzard* had more disturbing inter-family relations than this pack of suburban-dwelling trailer trash.

Post, the *auteur* behind *Beneath The Planet of the Apes*, doesn't help matters with his bland, by-the-numbers direction and murky, unremarkable photography. There is a twist ending, but it's not nearly twisted enough to make up for the eighty minutes preceding it. In fact, the whole thing feels a lot like an overly-padded segment of *Night Gallery*.

Image's source print is faded and a bit speckled, and the full-frame DVD contains nary a frill, aside from a separate music-only track isolating the so-so score by composer Gerald Fried, the man responsible for *Star Trek's* famous fight music (dun-dun-dab-dah-dah-DAH-dundun-dab-dah!), the kind of spice that could really have livened the likes of *The Baby* up considerably.

—Joseph O'Brien

## A NICE REVAMP

Lips of Blood "DVD"

Starring Jean-Lou Philippe, Annie Brilland and Natalie Perrey

Written and directed by Jean Rollin

Redemption Video

Hooray! Another vampire film! Regular readers of this magazine will know very well how I feel about this overexposed sub-genre, and it should come as no surprise that I was prepared to dislike *Lips of Blood* on principle alone. So, imagine my surprise when I actually enjoyed this film. A lot.

*Lips of Blood* is haunting and moody, and while it features vampires, it also involves so much more. At a party, a photograph of medieval ruins captivates Frederic (Philippe), and triggers a memory of him as a young boy, lost in those very ruins as night falls. A mysterious young woman clad in white comes to his aid, and cares for him through the night. But is this memory real? Frederic's mother claims it isn't, that it is some remnant from a long forgotten dream. But when Frederic investigates the actual location of the photograph, he becomes convinced that he sees the apparition of the young woman beckoning him through the streets of Paris. As his search intensifies, strangers appear to thwart him at every turn. Who are they, and why don't they want Frederic to find the answer he seeks?

What sets *Lips of Blood* apart from other films of this type is its mood. Set against the backdrop of modern Paris (circa 1975), the juxtaposition of crypts and cemeteries with subways and aquariums evokes a sense of the collision of past with present, which in turn echoes Frederic's childhood memory returning to haunt him as an adult. Rollin's film works on multiple layers of meaning, and elevates *Lips of Blood* well above the standard vampire flick fare. Redemption Video's DVD is a crisp transfer and features the director's filmography and behind-the-scenes stills. No trailer unfortunately, just a fine film from one of Europe's best-known cult filmmakers.

—Brad Abraham



## REVENGE OF THE NUN

Ms.45

Starring Zoe Tamerlis, Edward Singer and Jack Thibau

Directed by Abel Ferrara

Written by N.G. St. John

Complete Entertainment



Let's face it: even to the hardened horror fan, the rape-revenge sub-genre can be pretty harsh. *Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave* still rank as some of most disturbing moments in fright film history; they're the type of films that make you want to bathe in bleach after viewing them. Not nearly as notorious, *Ms.45* has garnered a tidy cult following since its release in 1980 and, while often overlooked, is still usually recognized as one of the key inductees in the canon of the rape film.

*Ms.45* may be truly unnerving, but it's stylishly shot and driven by dark psychological terror rather than brutal exploitation.

Thana (played magnificently by the late Zoe Tamerlis) is a beautiful, young, mute fashion designer in the lower east side of New York. Shy and timid, she is the constant object of catcalls and harassment due to her good looks. The ultimate injustice occurs one day on her way home from work, however, as she is raped in an alleyway, then again by a burglar in her apartment. The supreme victim of her own fears, Thana loses her mind after killing her second attacker with a clothes iron.

She turns vigilante, touring the streets at night with alluring make up and sexy outfits (for the '80s anyway) and murdering any male who threatens, leers, or even acts disrespectful to the opposite sex. Dressing as a nun for a Halloween bash, Thana makes her final statement in a truly bloodcurdling and fitting finale.

Despite the implications of such a plot, *Ms.45* is generally not considered a feminist film. Shot in a voyeuristic gaze, the audience (most likely males under the age of 25) still identify with the female protagonist. Then again, no character aside from Thana is given any depth. The film is entirely from her perspective which, given her inability to speak, allows the viewer to be absorbed into her rapidly deteriorating state of mind.

Those already a part of the *Ms.45* fan club can rejoice over the film's new availability. For the uninitiated, prepare yourself for a truly unique film and another overlooked gem from the '80s.

—Aaron Lupton

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# Abraham vs. O'Brien in The Lair of Dario Argento!

## JOSEPH O'BRIEN IS A SIMPERING MAMA'S BOY

Inferno \*DVD\*

Starring Leigh McCloskey, Daria Nicolodi  
and Irene Miracle

Written and directed by Dario Argento  
Anchor Bay Entertainment

This was intended to be a rather extensive piece on the two newest releases from Anchor Bay's excellent Dario Argento Collection. Unfortunately, what would doubtless have been a stirring and informative overview was sabotaged by a whiny tengu-ing-on-thirty-year-old-sissy-boy, who

held his breath until he turned blue, stamping his feet because "I'm a bigger Argento fan than you!"

So, I was forced to take the high road and allow this simpering mama's boy take *Deep Red*, if only to shut him up and get him away from the *Rue Morgue* offices lest he continue

annoying the other staffers and further embarrassing himself.

*Inferno* is a sequel to Argento's *Suspiria*, the second installment to an as yet unfinished trilogy. Not as well known as Argento's other works, *Inferno* is filled with the hallucinatory imagery and staggeringly inventive deaths he has become famous for. From the extraordinary opening sequence (a tense swim through a corpse-infested, flooded basement) to the suitably colourful demises of the majority of the films characters, *Inferno* delivers on these all important levels.

The plot takes a back seat to these all-impressive visuals, but *Inferno* failed to grab me the way other Argento films did. Not as innovative as *Timebreath*, nor as delightfully crazy as *Phenomena*, *Inferno* pales in comparison to the operatic splendour of *Suspiria*. On its own, *Inferno* is a fine film, but in the bigger scheme of things... you get the idea.

While not as accessible to Argento neophytes as *Deep Red* or *Suspiria*, this re-mastered release of *Inferno* will be a godsend to Argento fans, who are once again spoiled by Anchor Bay with a first rate collection. *Inferno* left me thirsting for more.

Unfortunately none was to be had because of the petulant hissy-fits of a self-involved child-man. *Inferno* comes highly recommended, and I'm sure a double-bill with *Deep Red* will allow for a greater appreciation and understanding of the Italian Maestro's works.

-Brad Abraham

## BRAD ABRAHAM IS A LYIN' BEE-ATCH

Deep Red \*DVD\*

Starring David Hemmings and Daria Nicolodi

Directed by Dario Argento

Written by Dario Argento and Bernardino Zapponi

Anchor Bay Entertainment

Gentle reader, though it may pain me greatly to bring the following to your attention, in the interests of both veracity and vengeance it is nonetheless necessary: my good friend Brad Abraham cannot be trusted. His hastily-cobbled-together pack of flimsy excuses do little to disguise the fact that he is a shiftless, beady-eyed poltroon who made attempts to abscond with the review copy of Dario Argento's masterpiece *Deep Red*. This despite the fact that he is fully aware that it is my personal favorite of Argento's films, and that I had a standing arrangement with our editor, the wise and just Gudino, to review said film should it ever grace the offices of this fine publication - an honourable gentleman's agreement (surely the foundation of any civilized society) that my crude, culturally baumic colleague has childishly chosen to dismiss as "dibs." Were he possessed of even a modicum of decorum he would surely cast himself willingly in front of the nearest public transit conveyance rather than permit his family to continue to suffer the dishonour his unconscionable actions have brought upon them all. Alas, alas...

Nevertheless, despite the pall these unfortunate occurrences have cast over the proceedings, they cannot dampen my enthusiasm for this long-awaited DVD release. *Profondo rosso* finds Argento at the height of his powers, emerging from the nascent stages of his "animal trilogy" gialli (*The Bird With The Crystal Phallage*, *Cat O' Nine Tails* and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*) to create an artistic and stylistic triumph that stands as one of the great thrillers of the seventies, and certainly the best of Argento's career.



*Inferno*: not as good as *Deep Red*

Hemmings, best known from the arthouse success *Blow-Up* (and more recently seen as the corpulent, bewigged coliseum announcer in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*), finds himself again the central player in another labyrinthine mystery when he witnesses the brutal murder of a popular psychic in the apartment above his own. What follows is a classic mix of intrigue and stylish bloodletting set to the synthesized throb of Goblin's unforgettable prog-rock debut.

This DVD release represents the restoration of nearly 20 minutes of additional material deleted from the film's original American release. Sorry gorehounds, there's no new violence to be had here; the footage consists primarily of (gasp!) character development involving the relationship between Hemmings and Nicolodi (Argento's real-life girlfriend and occasional co-writer, most notably on *Suspiria*). The restored footage renders these amongst the most fully-realized characters in the director's entire oeuvre, all the more significant considering his tendency to treat players like chesspieces to maneuver and slaughter with stylistic abandon. Although the film was shot in English, the restored footage is available only in Italian, with helpful subtitles appearing onscreen for those sequences. These language transitions aren't nearly as jarring as they might sound, and, for parists, the Italian language soundtrack is also available in its entirety.

So throw away those crummy dupes from your friend's friend's Japanese laserdisc. Anchor Bay's letterboxed transfer is certainly the best video presentation this seminal work has ever received... just don't let Brad get too close to your copy.

-Joseph O'Brien

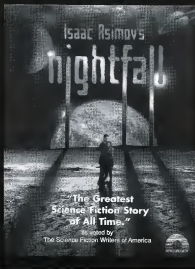
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DEEP RED



*(Editor's Note: Brad Abraham and Joseph O'Brien are as fast good friends and this otherwise snail-paced review delivery that their otherwise great friendship has come to a bitter end. Not to worry. Perilous Aches Bay will send out copies of every release.)*

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## A STORY OF LOVE

**Black Sunday (The Mask of Satan) 1960 \*DVD\***

Starring Barbara Steele, John Richardson and Ivo Garrani

Directed by Mario Bava

Written by Ennio De Concini and Mario Serandini

Image Entertainment



**Black Sunday: Mario Bava's masterpiece.**

Way back in the last century, when I was but a lad, I became captivated with a woman; raven-black hair, porcelain skin, and eyes that both enraptured and unsettled. Her name was Barbara Steele and the film was *The Pit and the Pendulum*, a movie that caused me many a sleepless night... an experience I had forgotten until I sat down to soak in *Black Sunday*.

Inarguably Mario Bava's masterpiece, *Black Sunday* is the tale of Moldavian Princess Asa (Steele), condemned to death along with her brother, for witchcraft. Some two centuries after her death, Asa is accidentally resurrected by two doctors who unwittingly pave the way for her to exact revenge on her family, starting with her own twin, Princess Katia.

Watching *Black Sunday*, I was overwhelmed by the sensation of the history of horror cinema passing before my eyes. Suffused with the atmosphere of a classic Universal horror film and gone straight out of Hammer, Bava's direction is picture perfect. The sets are cloaked in heavy fog, crypts are strewn with cobwebs and rats of the winged variety. Steele, as the resurrected witch Asa, commanded my attention every second she was on screen.

Bava's black and white cinematography recalls the best of German Expressionism, and in a day and age when classic is applied to anything of dubious quality, *Black Sunday*

is the genuine article. The DVD (from Image's Mario Bava Collection) is a must have for any horror fan. Tim Lucas (of *Video Watchdog* fame) provides an interesting and informative commentary, and it's clear that this is one of his favourite films. If you have missed *Black Sunday*, now's the best time to acquaint yourself with this true horror masterpiece.

-Brad Abraham

## FUN WITH SATAN

**Horror Hotel 1960**

Starring Christopher Lee, Patricia Jessel and Betta St. Joan

Directed by John Llewellyn Moxey

Written by George Baxt

Englewood Entertainment

"Check into Horror Hotel/This place is creepy and it's sombre too," sang the Misfits in 1978. Now, Fiends and fellow b-film enthusiasts can rejoice over Englewood Entertainment's recent reissue of this classic black & white spookshow. Released in 1960 as *City of the Dead*, this long forgotten horror gem has been overlooked in the past, a grave injustice to a beautifully shot, atmospheric film that showcases a young Christopher Lee already creeping the hell out of drive-in and late-night TV audiences.

In a plot somewhat similar to *Psycho*, a

young history student named Nan Barlow (St. Joan) travels to a small New England town in hopes of finding something unique to contribute to the study of witchcraft. She finds what she's looking for and a little bit more at the Raven Inn, where a cult of Satanists have gathered just in time for their annual virgin sacrifice. When Nan doesn't return, both her brother and boyfriend investigate, leading up to another time-honoured battle with the forces of darkness.

Although this reissue doesn't tamper much with the original, *Horror Hotel* still succeeds in capturing all the atmosphere that once made it so great. Long shadows, loads of fog and eerie looking strangers all go a long way for classic b-movie fun.

Director John Moxey doesn't have a huge name in classic horror, though he has contributed the cult favourite *Night Stalker*. Whether you're a Fiend or not, you should still check in to the *Horror Hotel*. After Roman Polanski's recent Beelzebub bore-fest *The Ninth Gate* (see RM#15), you owe it to yourself to have a little fun with Satan.

-Aaron Lupton



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# Comics by Pedro Cabezuelo

## Blood in four colours



**Y**ou've got to hand it to Elvira. She's been on the scene for well over a decade now and although her repertoire is somewhat limited, she's still fun to watch. Or, in this case, read. Claypool Comics have been publishing a regular Elvira series for a few years now and, given the volatile state of the industry, the fact that the series is now in its 84th issue is a testament to the character's long-lasting appeal.

This is not the first comic that Elvira has graced. Years ago, DC published *Elvira's House of Mystery*. However, she mostly served as that title's narrator and the series was little more than a *Tales From the Crypt* retread. It was cancelled after its first year.

Claypool wisely chose to focus the series on Elvira herself and play up the humour angle inherent in the character. As such, the series is more in tone (though not necessarily in quality) with the much-maligned Elvira movie than with straightforward horror.

Issue 84 of *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* contains two stories. The first deals with Elvira's investigation of the mysterious murder of a theology professor; the second is part two of a three part story in which our notorious heroine is hounded for corrupting senior citizens through her bookmobile! Needless to say, in both cases hilarity ensues.

Written by Frank Strom and Tony Isabella, Elvira is campy, self-referential, silly and fun. The stories are well-written and full of groan-inducing puns. The art by Ron Sutton and Dan Day is crisp and clean and while the artists do have a tendency to exaggerate her breasts (no big surprise), it's never obscene or exploitative. Fans of the character will be entertained, others need not apply.

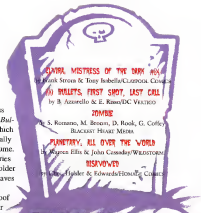
On a more serious (though less supernatural) tone is Vertigo's *100 Bullets: First Shot, Last Call* collection, which gathers the first five issues of the critically acclaimed series in one volume.

The basic premise of the series is as follows: a mysterious older gentleman named Agent Graves approaches individuals who have been wronged with proof of the people responsible for their troubles. He then supplies them with a gun, one hundred rounds of ammunition and complete immunity should they choose to exact revenge.

The first three issues of the series rotate around Dizzy Cordova, a recently released gang-banger who discovers the truth behind the murder of her husband and child. The next two issues deal with Lee Dolan, a man who lost his family and way of life when he was incorrectly accused of possessing and trafficking child pornography. When Graves points Dolan in the right direction, Dolan attempts to piece his life back together again. By the end of the second storyline there is the sense that something much larger is brewing behind the scenes and we have only witnessed the tip of the iceberg.

*100 Bullets* is a hard-hitting, no nonsense thriller written by Brian Azzarello and drawn by Eduardo Risso. Excellently scripted and paced with striking and effective visuals, the series avoids the over-the-top violence and gore prevalent in other 'adult' titles. Violence is mostly low-key, but when it does rear its head it's highly effective. A truly mature comic, this collection is a great place for people unfamiliar with the series to jump on board.

Speaking of over-the-top violence, few can claim that the works of Lucio Fulci fail to deliver on this front, and the Italian director's 1979 film *Zombie* is full of blood and viscera. Twenty years later, Blackest Heart Media is proud to bring you the official comic book adaptation of the movie in a special limited edition which also includes the premiere of the soundtrack on CD.



**ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK** #84

By Frank Strom & Tony Isabella/CLAYPOOL COMICS

**100 BULLETS, FIRST SHOT, LAST CALL**

by B. Azzarello & E. Risso/DC VERTIGO

**ZOMBIE**

By S. Romano, M. Besson, D. Hook, G. Coffey  
BLACKEST HEART MEDIA

**PLANETARY, ALL OVER THE WORLD**

By Warren Ellis & John Cassaday/WILDSTORM

**DISAVOWED**

By John Fester & Edwards/ECONOMY COMICS

The story, such as it is, begins with a beat running adrift in New York Harbour. On board are a flesh-eating corpse and the only clue to the whereabouts of Professor Bowles: a letter addressed to his daughter

Ann in which he discusses experiments on dead bodies. Soon, Ann and reporter Peter West head to the island Bowles' ship sailed from, and come face to decaying face with the horrible truth.

Adapted by Stephen Romano, the book follows the movie faithfully for the most part. There are a few additional scenes and the inclusion of Romano's own character, a voodoo shaman leading the army of the living dead. In addition, some scenes have been shuffled



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around or reworked to make a more coherent story. Purists may whine, but a good adaptation should build on the original material and create its own identity. In this *Zombie* succeeds.

Unfortunately, Romano's art lets the project down somewhat. It is not horrible by any means, but the characters seem somewhat cartoonish given the gruesome material. Also, many of the pages are too cramped and it is often difficult to make out exactly what is happening. Sometimes this lessens the impact of what is transpiring.

A perfect example is the sequence where a female victim's face is pulled towards a splintered door, impaling her eye. On the screen this was a gruesome and very unsettling scene. Romano's depiction, however, is laid out in an unsatisfying manner. On a side note, I also think this adaptation would have benefitted tremendously from being in colour as opposed to black and white, although I'm sure this was more of a budgetary decision than an artistic one.

*Zombie* is not a failure however, and the inclusion of the soundtrack sweetens the deal immensely. Composed by Fabio Frizzi

and Giorgio Tucci, the score is pulse pounding and hypnotic. It's worth buying the package merely for this gem.

Warren Ellis has made quite a name for himself over the past couple of years with his work on Vertigo's *Transmetropolitan* and Wildstorm's *Planetary*. Both titles deal in their own way with the dawn of the new millennium and mankind's place in the new age. Wildstorm has recently collected the first six issues of *Planetary* in trade paperback form.



A cross between *The X-Files* and Indiana Jones, *Planetary* is the name of a team of three people, funded by a mysterious fourth, who search the world for strangeness and wonder. In effect, they are mystery archaeologists. The team consists of Jakita Wagner, the Drummer and its newest member, the hundred-year old Elijah Snow. Each member has secret powers which are hinted at and glimpsed every once in a while.

The first three issues tell stories that appear at first to be disconnected. Our team encounters a machine capable of altering

the multiverse, a 1940s superhero thought dead, an island filled with the corpses of giant monsters (a wonderful homage to Godzilla and his kin) and the ghost of a slain Chinese policeman. By the fourth issue, things begin to tie together, and by the sixth it is obvious that some grand plot is batching which will affect the evolution of man.

*Planetary* is a modern masterpiece. Meticulously written and plotted, beautifully drawn by John Cassaday, it is both a simple and light read while hinting at a much larger and complex storyline. Characters grow from issue to issue

while retaining sufficient mystery to keep the reader guessing. It is obvious that Ellis is a huge fan of Alan Moore as his storytelling style owes a great deal to his predecessor - *Planetary* has a similar look and feel to *Watchmen*. Yet Ellis is no mere imitator and has carved his own identity and secured a name for himself within the industry. If you are a fan of great and challenging comics and missed *Planetary* the first time around, here's your chance to catch up.

Finally, we have *Homage Comics' Disallowed*, a new ongoing series written by Brandon Choi and Mike Weiser and drawn by Tommy Lee Edwards. Yet another complex tale, the first issue introduces us to policeman Dalton Morrell. Morrell is haunted with visions of past lives in which he constantly grapples with the same opponent - a murderer who taunts him with his victims' deaths. When the same murderer appears to threaten the life of his son, Morrell must confront his visions and determine their veracity.

The first issue of *Disallowed* introduces a number of intriguing concepts and questions. It is a very well written and accomplishes what any good start should - draw the reader in. The second issue, by comparison, suffers somewhat by detailing the storyline introduced in the previous chapter in favour of exposition and the backstory to a new character, psychic Cassandra Calder. I must admit that the title lost me after having set me up beautifully as I found Cassandra's story to be overlong and unexciting. While it is still too early to judge the series as a whole, the second issue doesn't live up to the goods.

Not helping matters is the artwork (which was equally a problem in the first issue). There is a very dirty and sloppy feel to the work, as if someone had sketched the scenes with a heavy charcoal pastel. Characters and actions are difficult to make out. In addition, the heavy expository nature of the story means many panels are buried in word balloons, causing the art to suffer even more. Perhaps the creators should space themselves out more instead of trying to cram everything in. A more relaxed pace and a cleaner look could raise this book from promising to accomplished. ☺



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# HOUSE MAKES CULT CLASSIC A PEEK AT POE'S NECRO-EROTICA BRITISH HORROR'S FINEST HOUR



## House of Leaves

Mark Z. Danielewski  
Pantheon Books

Realism is the trump card of all scary stories. Witness *Dracula*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Blair Witch Project* (to name a few); these stories all paid a great debt to the idea that they were real in some form or another. *House of Leaves* uses this technique very effectively – self-consciously examining it and at the same time integrating it into the reading process.

The book sets itself up as a “study” of a documentary known as The Navidson Record, which follows a famous photographer and his family as they move into a new house. Things go weird when they discover that their new home seems to have differing dimensions on the outside than on the inside. One hallway in particular slowly expands to reveal a terrifying, infinite black labyrinth that swallows up anything that enters it.

The book as a whole, however, is much bigger than the story of The Navidson Record; it plays out on several different layers of reality, and in each of these, the documentary is perceived differently. In some instances, The Navidson Record’s authen-



ticity is debated; in others, there is no evidence of its existence whatsoever.

These various layers come in the form of footnotes, appendices, collages and documents from a number of different “sources” – all layered over a manuscript called *House of Leaves*. Ultimately, *House of Leaves* is a scholarly and semiotic interpretation of The Navidson Record written by a blind man in a world where it doesn’t exist.

This is nothing less than a brilliant book. Structurally, it mirrors the labyrinth at the core of its narrative; visually, it resembles an Escher painting (you will even find yourself turning it up-side-down and sideways to get at its sinister riddles). You may have been hearing whisperings of *House of Leaves* on the internet (where it had its birth) and elsewhere. Follow the trail; a truly haunting experience awaits you inside these pages.

—Roland Brown

## Dead Brides Edgar Allan Poe Creation Books/Marginal

“There is nothing so poetic in the world as the death of a beautiful woman,” Edgar Allan Poe once remarked. He proved it by



sketching some of the most striking literary portraits of feminine beauty – Berenice, Morella, Ligeia, Madeline Usher, Lenore – only to detail their disintegration at the hands of disease, madness and murder.

Today, we may call Poe’s obsession literary necrophilia, and we may mine it for other like-minded ideas, as this tiny book (just shy of a hundred pages) has done. *Dead Brides* aims to reinterpret five of the late author’s more notable stories within the theme of vampirism, hardly a stretch considering that Poe saturated many of his stories with necro-erotica.

The reason behind Poe’s obsession is tackled by scholar Jeremy Reed in his preface titled *Poe, Opium and the Pathology of the House of Usher*. Reed indulges in a little bit of historical analysis, suggesting that The Fall Of The House Of Usher directly addresses the real dead bride in Poe’s life: his cousin Virginia Clemm who died of tuberculosis.

Given that most people associate the author with the mad voice of his narratives that’s hardly surprising, but Reed explores the story to draw some pretty creepy links between Poe and Roderick Usher, both of whom saw their incestuous relationships turn, literally, to dust.

If dissecting Poe is not your thing, you can always kick back with the stories and the brooding lithographs of Odilon Redon, a French symbolist who read Poe to inspire images in his subconscious, which he drew. A lightweight book and probably not the most indispensable item on the market, *Dead Brides* nevertheless packs some punch. It manages to cast a more decadent shadow on Poe, no small feat considering he is renowned as an alcoholic who lived and died in the cloud of his own unsettling writings.

-Rod Gudino

## Uneasy Dreams: The Golden Age of British Horror Films, 1956-1976

Gary A. Smith  
McFarland & Co.

Hardcovers and trade paperbacks have become so ridiculously expensive that selecting an encyclopedia-style horror guide these days warrants considerable research if you don't have a lot of disposable income to gamble. Horror has become such an ambiguous label that any comprehensive single-volume overview might just snap the legs off that coffee table you were buying it for. Depending upon your point of view, the situation is either alleviated or complicated by the recent availability of tomes devoted to horror's sub-genres (vampires, aliens, splatter) and various watershed periods.

British horror - while virtually non-existent at present - dominated the scene during the twenty years examined in this volume. While Hammer films figure prominently here (as they should), Gary A. Smith also covers everything else from Amicus anthologies to the shock-schlock of former softcore porn director Pete Walker. Erring on

the side of caution, Smith even includes *2001* and *A Clockwork Orange*, presumably as a means of covering all the bases. Also included are interviews with several Brit-horror luminaries including director Gordon Hessler and actress-turned-producer Aida Young, and dozens of production stills from classics, cult faves and flops alike.

Smith's critiques are often too brief, eschewing depth in favour of including a broader range of titles. Nonetheless, *Uneasy Dreams* is virtually unrivalled as a reference guide to one of horror's most prolific and progressive eras.

-John W. Bowen

## The Travelling Vampire Show

Richard Laymon

Cemetery Dance Publications

In the small town of Grandville in 1963, three sixteen-year-olds get excited about a mysterious Travelling Vampire Show. The event is taking place in Jinks Field, a little bit of local Hell-on-Earth with a particularly nasty history. Our band of heroes includes the narrator, Dwight, his chubby and annoying friend Rusty, and Slim, a sexy and spunky young woman who changes her name frequently in homage to whatever

## FROM CHRISTIAN DEATH TO DEATH

### The Art of Rozz Williams

Nico B. Ed.  
Last Gasp

Rozz Williams inexplicably ended his life in his West Hollywood apartment on April 8, 1998. The loss would probably have gone unnoticed outside of certain long-standing Goth circles, where Williams was widely honoured as one of the godfathers of the movement and an originator in the less publicized death rock wave of the early '80s. Williams is most often associated with Christian Death, the cult death rock group which he founded with punk guitar legend Rikk Agnew, and which seemed to fit in at very few gigs: too poetic and effeminate for the drunk n' angry punk crowd, yet still too punk rock for the Goth community.

The result was a fervent, if lower profile, affiliation with both genres, and one of the most unique attractions of the decade.

But Rozz Williams was not just a ring-leader for a fashion trend, and his friends and associates have taken it upon themselves to ensure his unique contributions to poetry and art would finally become recognized as something more than the precursor to Marilyn Manson. The result is this book, a 250-page documentation of the music, poetry, and artwork from Williams' career, covering his involvement in Christian Death, Shadow Project, Rozz Williams solo, *Premature Ejaculation*, and numerous other projects.

Despite great intentions, however, I was disappointed with the lack of readable material. Background information is

reduced to a few short quotes from friends who professed Williams' genius and the mystery surrounding his tragic suicide. *The Art of Rozz Williams* ultimately comes off as a rather exclusive project; Christian Death fans are treated to band photos, complete lyrics, and live performances, while the uninitiated are left in the dark as to what all the fuss was about.

Williams' failure to make it in the record industry is reflected in his shift toward 'heavier' artistic projects, such as spoken word performances and *PIG*, a surreal and nightmarish depiction of the emptiness of life, and the brutality of his home country. Paper collages in the twisted vein of Salvador Dali dominate his artwork, while his

poetry is harsh, unenjoyable, and virtually identical to the hard rock-lyrics of Christian Death.

Throughout all of this, Williams stuck to certain themes: death, the swastika (a symbol for the hypocrisy of contemporary America), attacks on Christianity, and concern for a blind society. *The Art of Rozz Williams* will probably not be found on the coffee tables of the average horror connoisseur, but it comes recommended as a detailed look at the mind of a man who is undoubtedly a foundational pillar of dark music.

THE ART OF ROZZ WILLIAMS



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Bad Dream: From Hammer's *The Reptile*

-Aaron Lupton



novel she's currently enjoying. Before long, Dwight approaches Lee, his voluptuous twenty-something sister-in-law to escort them to the vampire show — which they are too young to attend by themselves. The stage is set for an enticingly scary tale.

Vaguely reminiscent of coming-of-age horror stories by writers like Ray Bradbury and Stephen King, *The Traveling Vampire Show* is enlivened by Laymon's trademark tongue-in-cheek sensibility and a variety of sexual sub-plots. Although it seems like a mix that might work well, the comic aspects undermine the dramatic impetus of the narrative and the sex scenes at the end are not only gratuitous, but actually interfere with the action. After a promising start, the novel devolves into a mish-mash of red-herrings, unlikely coincidences and subplots that contribute nothing to the story — like one involving Rusty's elephantine, thirteen-year-old sister Bitsy.

As it approaches the climax, the narrative unravels so quickly it practically explodes into nonsensical yet predictable pieces. Will Rusty lose his head over Valeria, the lust-crazed vamp? Can a skinny girl with a bow and arrow rescue her boyfriend from the vampire and a dozen armed henchmen? What do you think?

Laymon is fun to read and *The Traveling Vampire Show* contains enough plot and titillation for two novels, but its inability to make me suspend disbelief served as a stake through the heart of this engaging but ultimately disappointing book.

—Dale L. Sproule

### Night Freight Bill Pronzini Leisure Books

*Night Freight* is a collection of 26 short stories that span Pronzini's career, and there isn't a dud in the bunch. Is he Tolstoy? Well,

## BEAUTY & DESPAIR IN PAIN & WONDER

### Tales of Pain and Wonder Caitlin R. Kiernan Gauntlet Press

The sheer beauty and poetry of Caitlin R. Kiernan's writing never fails to startle, no matter what its narrative form, novel or short story. *Tales of Pain and Wonder*, her collection of new and previously published stories is no exception. The twenty-one stories that comprise the book slice effortlessly through the dark waters of late-twentieth century blasted lives and landscapes, from Athens, Georgia to archetypal urban holding-pens like Los Angeles, New York, and New Orleans. One of Kiernan's greatest gifts as a writer is her ability to show the unflinching beauty in despair, the poetry in the lives of the disaffected and the marginalized without endowing them with any false glamour. As horror stories they are without parallel.

As Peter Szrám says in the book's Afterword, "Kiernan's characters inhabit a worn-out exhausted world long since degraded by pollution and neglect into a uniformly oppressive bleakness." Her gifts

no, but he is a consummate professional — the weakest stories are decent and the best ones soar.

Like all great short story writers, Pronzini chooses his words carefully. The result are sparse stories that manage to create richly drawn characters and settings in the fewest possible words. His style is engrossing, deserving the term "page-turner," and I had to smile as I recognised in each story the moment when this guy began to suck me in.

The stories are divided into two types: short pieces that rely upon clever one-line endings, and longer, character-driven stories. Angel of Mercy is a shining

as a writer are so secure that this is accomplished without out any of the trendy fumbling that accompanies so much of the goth-inspired fiction currently cluttering the bookstore racks. Many of the stories in this collection are loosely interconnected, but all can and should be read individually in order to experience Kiernan's talent fully.

Though a gifted storyteller, Kiernan's greatest gift to the reader of this collection is her masterful use of language. Drawing blood from the first line of the first story, *Anamorphosis*, she lays the terrain for the reader: "Deacon was walking, ragged boots slapping concrete, not even noticing cracks or a quarter someone dropped. *Just keep walking, marching, letting the red shit behind his eyes bleed off in the April heat, and what's that Mr. Eliot? Sorry, man, no blues, just bus fart diesel and the shitty sweet stink of kudzu.*" Not a "nice" march, this book, thank God, but an unforgettable one.

—Michael Rowe

example of the former; *Out Of The Depths*, the latter. In the first, a kind old lady runs an apothecary from a travelling wagon, while on the side she dispenses surprisingly effective contraceptives to young girls in trouble. In *Out Of The Depths*, a woman takes drastic measures to save herself from one man, only to be thrown into the clutches of another.

An extra feature of the collection is the author's notes that precede each story. Pronzini's comments are entertaining and insightful, and provide the reader with a refreshingly candid window into the author's assessment of his own work.

—Eric Sparling



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**THE TIGER LILLIES  
Shockheaded Peter  
WARNER MUSIC**

I'm still trying to get my head around the "Junk Opera" rendition of Heinrich Hoffmann's *Stille Wasser* that hit Toronto a few months back (see page 22). The book is classic Gernot K. but this music is weird British shit. Monty Python meets Barham & Bailey. The Tiger Lillies are an uncanny trio led by a shrill voiced accompanist and accompanied by a standup bass and a tiny drunk on wheels. They squeeze strange harmonies out of Hoffmann's stories, happy-go-lucky tunes reveling in morbidity (each song ends in the torture or death of a marionette child). While I have to admit I really dug *Shockheaded Peter* is best experienced as a complete theatre piece. This album isn't bad by any stretch (and it's sometimes so weird as to be unsettling) but I'm only recommending it to those looking for Something Completely Different. -GC ★★



**CAT PEOPLE  
Roy Webb  
Masco Polo**

Vai Lewton was referred to more than once as the only producer in Hollywood with brains, and it showed. As associate producer in charge of RKO's horror unit, Lewton brought a remarkable sense of

style to the genre, made more impressive considering what the competition was releasing at the time. Lewton (a.k.a. The Sultan of Shudders) was responsible for *Cat People* (1942) and *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943), as well as *The Seventh Victim* (1943), *The Body Stripped* (1945) and *Bedlam* starring Boris Karloff (1946). Under contract at RKO at the time was composer Roy Webb, who ended up scoring all five films, brought together here in 70 minutes of movie music. Like the films, Webb's emphasis was on the psychological undertone of the visuals, rather than the action on screen. As a result, the album is fluid and creepy, fully rendered and dripping dark atmosphere. A lot of care has been given to this collection, both in the recording itself and the package which features extensive liner notes and photos. Consider it a crime to overlook it. -GC ★★



**TERROR OF THE ZYGONS  
Geoffrey Burdon  
BBC Music**

Even while *Doctor Who* was still alive on the airwaves, the show was a cash cow for collectible merchandise. Now that it has entered into the netherworld of reruns, its status as classic can hardly be overstated. That is why I encourage every one of you to run out and avail yourself of a copy of *Terror of the Zygons*, which as it happens also contains music from *The Seeds of Doom*. Music for both of these episodes was handled by Geoffrey Burdon in a departure from regular composer Dudley Simpson. Burdon sketched the show's meagre budget in ten different directions, using a chamber ensemble of five musicians (playing a combination of flute, clarinet, harp, violin, cello, clavichord and percussion) to generate a real lasting flavour of what were undoubtedly two of the show's more horrifying

episodes. *Terror of the Zygons* was digitally remastered from Burdon's own listening copy (seeing as how the BBC was not in the habit of preserving source tapes). You can barely make out a hiss in the background, but that's a good thing, this one is definitely for rainy weekends. *The Terror Of The Zygons* by the way, was novelized as *Doctor Who and the Loch Ness Monster*. Also includes two takes of the marvellous *Doctor Who* theme. -GC ★★



**HEAVY METAL 2000  
Various  
Restless Records**

It's amazing that it took this long to make a second *Heavy Metal* movie and amazing that they managed to fuck up the music. I remember catching my first adult cartoon back in 1981, *Heavy Metal* to the music of Black Sabbath doing Mob Rules (featuring Dio) and Dewo doing Whip It. It was a weird mix, but it perfectly captured the exhibition, the ruggeness and the rebelliousness of the fanfare's original vision. This album may have some good tunes, but it doesn't evoke anything other than a lot of white noise. Motörhead does their thing, Pantera does their thing, Insane Clown Posse does their thing, System of a Down, Puya and Machine Head do their thing. Somewhere on this heap you'll find revitalized Baby Idol and some modern Bauhaus with cobwebs intact. 'Gott it, really. Two discs. -GC ★



**HAMLET  
Various  
RYKOPALM**

With Leo D'Caprio's success with Shakespeare in Baz Luhrmann's ultra-modern remake of *The Bard's* classic romance, it was inevitable that some sort of bandwagon was officially given the send-off. Here, we have a retelling of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (murder! betrayal! ghosts!) with Ethan Hawke and Kyle MacLachlan doing the Stratford boogie in an urban sprawl lit up by the music of Prince. Scream and Marched. The vibe is hip rather than dark, though there are some ink moments on this soundtrack, like the nightmare electro-indus-

al of Acceleradeck and The Birthday Party's electro-Gothic theme song. Actually, there's a surprising amount of darkness here if you read between the lines and it doesn't hurt that the album flows together with some really great music courtesy of Supreme Beings of Leisure, Michael Hurley and others. -GC ★★



**THE BEST OF  
STAR TREK Vol. Two  
Various  
GNP Crescendo**

There are probably more *Star Trek* compilations on the market than there are Trekkies and Trekkers combined. I've just about had enough of the theme music, so I find it hard to assess this particular album. A mix of 'best of' material, it boasts music from the original series' more notable episodes (*The Corbomite Maneuver*, *Balance of Terror*, *What Are Little Girls Made Of*), ditto for *Deep Space Nine* (*Way Of The Warrior*, *His Way*),  *Voyager* (*Birds Of Chocoma*) and *TNG* (*All Good Things*). Some nice liner notes, but nothing you couldn't get off the net. -GC ★



**TRANS-SIBERIAN  
ORCHESTRA  
Beethoven's Last Night  
ATLANTIC/WARNER BROS.**

Imagine if the devil visited Beethoven on his dying night to collect his soul, and asked instead for his music? Would the dying composer exchange everything he ever worked for to escape the fires of Hell? This is the topic of *Beethoven's Last Night*, an ambitious rock opera of Andrew Lloyd Webber proportions by Trans-Siberian Orchestra (featuring members of Savatage). Comparisons to Lloyd Webber are inevitable and justified, obviously these guys are going for a similar soft rock sound that fills off of Beethoven's more renowned numbers, *Moonlight Sonata*, *Fur Elise* and *Symphony No. 6* among them. Their opera has spectacle written all over it, with a host of dramatic personae like the spirit master Fate, her deformed dwarf son Twist, the ghost of Wolfgang Mozart and, of course, Mephistopheles himself. I found the whole thing a little too light and

even life despite the weight of a hundred instruments (maybe it's just that I can't take the desecration of Beethoven's finest music, no matter how well-intended it is). Those precious few of you who find place in their diet for Meat Loaf (he makes an appearance) might actually get into this. -GC 3.5.5.5



**HOLGER CZUKAY**  
**La Luna**

**TONE CASUALTIES**

Holger Czukay recorded *La Luna* live in his "lab" in 1996. He referred to it as "an electronic night economy," and to his credit, it sounds exactly like that: a throb of technological gadgetry in a sparse, minimalist form. Only occasionally do we hear a human voice (in this case U-She, who narrates from her poem of the same name). Czukay has received accolades in this mag in the past (see Classic Cut RM18) and there's no doubt that his explorations centre around places both dark and weird. *La Luna* ("The moon") is a 47-minute inner space epic with a strange allure. Sometimes you can hear echoes both literal and ghostly over the whee of machinery. -GC 3.5.5.5



**THE CURE**  
**Bloodflowers**  
**Fiction/Elektra**

Completing the 'imaginary trilogy' that left off eleven years ago with the fan favorite *Disintegration*, and which began with 1982's *Pomography*, *Bloodflowers* marks a return to what, for many fans, is the Cure at their best: moody, reflective, and introspective. This type of album has always been primarily responsible for whatever kept The Cure may have as a goth band. Despite the "darkness" factor, however, there is no anarchy (Libaries or Prayers For Rain on this album). Written as if it was to be the band's last (although Robert Smith seems to have since changed his mind), *Bloodflowers* nevertheless feels like an honest and fearful goodbye. -RS 3.5.5.5



**NOTHING**  
**Non-descript**

**Root-O-Evil Records**

With a three-lined motto of confusion, apathy and silence, Nothing makes something out of what appears to be three keyboards and a microphone hung over the elevator shaft to Hall Jason Walton, John Haughton and Michelle Loose (whose mock suicide adorns the sleeve) back in the shadows of roto synth instrumentalism, occasionally summoning the ghostly echoes of jazz, pop and industrial. This is a dark musical experiment that can fill the most antiseptic suburban hall with thick gothic cobwebs. Put this on and redecorate. -GC 3.5.5.5



**GOTHABLY:**  
**WAKIN' THE DEAD**  
**Various**  
**Skully Records**

Rockabilly horror is a longtime love of mine. I loved it since the time I heard my first Cramps record, and even more now after the swell of swamp rock and horror surf that has since bubbled to the surface. But *Gothably* is the first record I've heard to formally put a name that works to the music. *Gothably* is about Elvis undead, night surf, horror punk and rockabilly from beyond the grave. Logically, there's a wide cross-section of the scene on this compilation, the sound of *Pulp Fiction* bleeds from Phantom Cowboys' Voodoo Burnins while Guit of the Psychic Fetus offers electrified Cramps with the honor pushed way up (on a song called *You Can Make It If You Run*). Those who've been following the scene from the (underground) will recognize The Empress of Fur (Johnny Voodoo), Psychonauts and my personal faves Deadbird (a band that evokes the dark beauty of comic book noir via their songs *Crimé Scène* and *Creepy World*). A cool half-eyed gulf-horror flick vibe showcases Bad Girls Go To Hell from a band called Agent X and the Kill Villains. At the other end of the spectrum, Electro

Bird Noise do a funky electronic experiment called *Lazy Turbuleweds*. Want to hear rock and roll from the Other Side? This is it. Twenty-one tunes total. Available from [www.skullyrecords.com](http://www.skullyrecords.com). -GC 3.5.5.5



**THE UNQUIET GRAVE 2000**  
**Various**

**Cleopatra Records**

Cleopatra Records have pretty much captured the best from the underground of Goth and its offshoots. Their comps are professionally put together with an eye for the aesthetic of the scene and an ear for the best of the independents and the really independents. Those of you familiar with the first installment in this (growing) series will no doubt recognize some of the names here, but there are also new voices from the Gothic, Darkwave, Industrial, EBM and Ethereal

underground. Vampirism, death, undead, woe, blood — *The Unquiet Grave* is a lusty homage to itself by those who are still creating and delving the music. Moments of apophony from Mors Synthetica (Ungrateful Girl), Crushedores (Marilyn, My Bitchness), Overlord Psychosis (Galaxia) and Stare (Bel Book & Candle), TNV (Televizual), Hrocco (Banished) and a blood hungry Lorence McKerrill soundlike in *Flesh For Eve* (The White). Two Cds and a lot to discover. -GC 3.5.5.5



**THE FORBIDDEN DIMENSION**  
**A Coffin of Crows**  
**Reanimat Records**

Originally a one man experiment in the realm of Horror Goth rock, The Forbidden Dimension were destined for obscurity despite ten or so years of breaking

**ROCK N' ROLL FOR MONSTERS**

**A FISTFUL OF ROCK N' ROLL Vols. 3 & 4**  
**Various**  
**TEE PEE RECORDS**

A more appropriate title for this Sal Carzonieri compiled barrage of Garage punk, nfi-rock and sleaze metal would have to be *Double Fisting Rock N' Roll*. The guitarist for New Jersey's Electric Frankenstein clearly has his (middle) finger on the pulse of today's best no-bones, shit-kicker holy saviors of rock. Fifteen bastard sons of Elvis combine for a relentless 45-minute barrage of all-heavy, in-your-face blast of pure sleaze. The results are like a runaway truck plowing down the highway of 150 mph, bloody pulp remnants of NSYNC mangled around the axle. *Fistful 3* poses the clutch with the Toilet Boys' glitzy *Urr! Let A Millionaire and floors the fucker from there. (Incidentally, if you've seen the Toilet Boys live you'll know that male singer Mike Gay looks more like Blondie than Debbie Harry ever will.)* What follows is a lethal cocktail



of punk abandon (AD2, Burntman), low-fi fuzz garage (Fumes, Rocket 455), and an unhealthy dose of reckless trash metal (Smilers, Bully). The best of the bunch closes the disc out in style with the Lazy Cowgirls' appropriately titled *Just The Last Goodbye*. Carzonieri's selections all rock independently, but not together like an unholy convoy in the night. Only one problem, Sal: no Dwarves? The fourth installment of Carzonieri's *Fistful* series kicks off suitably with Alabama's *Quadrants* heeding things up on *Freelink*. What follows is the same ferocious blend of DIY punk, glam and metal that made the series previous installments so worthy. Work four lack-ass Canadian bands into the mix and I'm in seventh heaven. What really stands out though are four songs which owe heavily to past purveyors of rock's DIY crown. Detroit's *Lovewesslers* adopt an uncanny Slogos swapper on *Mr. White*, and I had to check twice that the *Sleaze Boys* *Rockets And Bombs* wasn't actually an old Dickies tune. Also, thank *Forgotten Rebels 2000* when hearing *Calypso* Von Zippers tear it up on *Bad Generation*. The High School Sweethearts *Mutts* assure *She's Something* might be the best on here, or maybe I'm just a sucker for female vox. Whatever the case, *Fistful 4* doesn't disappoint. -TD

Vol. 3: 3.5.5.5/2  
Vol. 4: 3.5.5.5

**Goosebumps  
& God  
From  
The Residents!**

**THE RESIDENTS**  
**Diskomo 2000**  
**God In Three Persons**  
**East Side Digital**

Just when you thought it couldn't possibly get any more heaped, along come The Residents with a tribute album to the disco era! That's right, *Diskomo 2000* is pretty scary stuff. Imagine if you will, trying to come to terms with the disco craze through moody moods and ominous synths, in the way only The Residents can. The album was originally released in 1990, and has now been reissued as a compilation of sorts, along with another Residents experiment, *Goosebump*, which featured the Peemore Four mauling Mother Goose classics with a variety of Toys-R-Us instruments. Results vary from infatigating (*Farmers* - a maddening rendition of Old McDonalds Had A Farm) to creepy as hell (*Twinkle* - a warped take on Twinkle Twinkle Little Star). A couple of bonus tracks (*Twinkle 2000* and *Diskomo 1992*) make this worth the brain rash.

*God In Three Persons* is, literally, another story. Featuring the first-prize blasphemous cover (the Trinity envisioned as a cowboy gazing head from two naked girls), GIMP tells the convoluted tale of a money-hungry preacher and a pair of twin sisters who have some weird powers. It's all Greek to me, despite lengthy liner notes and narrative blurbs. The whole thing, however, reeks of madness and ends in murder. -GC

*Diskomo 2000* 3.5/5  
*God In Three Persons* 3.5/5

LAUREN KIRBY JENNISON  
AND THE OTHERS



out unsuspecting nightclub patrons across Western Canada's cowboy circuit. And it's a wonder that anyone outside of Calgary would ever hear these guys, considering their ill-fated distribution deal with the devil, at Cargo Records. *A Coffin of Crows* resurrects their original EP, a re-mastered cassette-only release and a few other ghostly odds and ends. Fuzzed out distortion and a K-mart quality beat-box offer a certain spooky charm that may tend to wear thin over the total twenty-one tracks. But with song titles such as *Dial M For Monster*, *Bad Girls Go To Hell*, and *Pickled Punks* who really cares? Fans of ghoul surf distortion, rotting flesh references, and anyone with an appreciation for the aesthetic significance of blood capsules should look into digging this one up. Long live coffin rock!

-TD 3.5/5



**ALICE COOPER**  
**Brutal Planet**  
**SPITFIRE RECORDS**

Kids, I have something to get off my chest: I am a huge Alice Cooper fan. The glamtash early days, the garage mystery of the seventies, whatever the hell he was doing in the early eighties, and yes, even the ultra-choice pop metal of *Constrictor* and *Raise Your Fist and Shout*, are all held dear to my heart. But in the interest of the *Rue Morgue* fans, Alice Cooper was a master showman who shocked and thrilled audiences with one of the most truly disturbing sidestage shows in music history. You all know the stories: the guillotine, the decapitated baby dolls, that chicken incident. But with the exception of a few interesting illusions, the Alice Cooper Show has in recent times taken a cleaner, gentler approach, and Alice himself has progressed to discovering Christianity, just like his old man. So what are we to make of a new Alice Cooper record? To begin, this album is **HEAVY**. Not in a metal or hardcore sense, but in a new-metal, manufactured sense. In fact, the entire album reeks of Manson-type sensibilities, the pounding rhythms of Cold Machines in particular. We aren't going to lie to you, long-time Alice Cooper fans won't find much Alice on *Brutal Planet*. But that's not to say that this isn't a significant album. The late eighties glam era may have been embarrassing, but it did encourage many a longhaired kid to investigate the bargain bin at the local record store for *Killer and Welcome to My Nightmare*. What they found there was a world that was horrifying, bizarre, and comically enchanting. Who's to say the *Brutal Planet* won't do the same?

-AL 3.5/5



**NATIVITY IN BLACK II**  
**Various**  
**VIRGIN RECORDS**

History has been rather unkind to Black Sabbath. They're (mostly) remembered as rock and roll doom sayers - the original black leather clad heavy metal Satanists. But Sabbath was actually a pretty remarkable musical force in the early days, the riff-heavy bass work of Geezer Butler, unappreciated drumming of Bill Ward, guitarist Tony Iommi handing out the ten commandments of heavy metal while Ozzy played the preacher to a T. Not surprisingly, this tribute focuses on the Sabbath early material: lots of stuff from *Black Sabbath*, *Paranoid* and nothing post *Never Say Die*. Most of it plays it by the numbers (Paranoid doing Electric Blue, Slayer doing Hand of Doom and Ozzy teaming up with Phantas on N.I.B.) but, ironically, it's what sounds best. Re-workings from Busta Rhymes (Iron Man) and Hed-Pe (Sabra Cadabra) are kind cool to listen to... once. In a way, that's a compliment. Even after the heavy metal explosion, nothing sounds quite like Black Sabbath. For us, there will always be something unique about a band who named themselves after a Mario Bros. film long before it was hip. -GC 3.5/5/2



**FUNKER VOGT**  
**Maschine Zeit**  
**METROPOLIS RECORDS**

Named after a radio operator in the German armed forces, Funker Vogt brings a heavy military theme to the emphatic drone beats and distorted voice of techno-industrial. Despite the traditional power play electronics, the group (Gerrit Thomas on synths and Jens Kastal on voice) evoke the shadow of warfare in terse, grainy stills. Songs like *Gurman*, *Nuclear Winter*, *Under Deck*, *Cold War* and, my fave, *Black Market Dealers* ("It's the summer of '45/Black market dealers are on the street/But we all feel so alive/Now we get again what we need"), contain the cosmic allure of the genuine article. Fans of KMFDM, Leather Ship and combat chic should really check this out. -GC 3.5/5/2



**WUMPS CUT:**  
**Blood Child**  
**METROPOLIS RECORDS**

Since its inception in 1991, Germany's Wumpscut has invaded the electronic underground like a synth-laden disease, inflicting near-existential doses of isolation and desperation. The demonic creation of one Rudy Ratzinger, Wumpscut impressed the hell out of us last year with an album called *Evil Young Flesh*. Apparently, we weren't the only ones, strong word of mouth followed: Wumpscut into North America and occasional this album, a collection of Ratzinger's earliest work compiled for the first time for audiences this side of the globe. *Blood Child* (But King offers an early glimpse at his genius: a whiff of Ministry, re-toolings of metal tropes (Julius Pae's The Hellion) and the deeper, synthetic sensismism that would later become the Wumpscut sound. For those of you who wondered how the act's optimism of New Wave deteriorated to the urban nightmare of industrial, this is the story. -GC 3.5/5/2



**IRON MAIDEN**  
**Brave New World**  
**EMI**

Yeah, these guys are as old as the hills and they haven't really changed their gills that much. But dang it! *Brave New World* isn't the best thing they've pulled out since *Powerslave*. That's not entirely surprising, taking into account that their latest marks a return of the band's classic line-up (notably Bruce Dickinson on vocals and Adrian Smith on guitar). Third guitarist Derek Gears sticks around for the show but I couldn't hear him through Dickinson's cavernous vocals, those great leads and the combo of drummer Neo McBrain and Steve Harris' double edged skull thumping. Traditional first person narratives about glory on the battlefield and the occasional creepy allegory still provide the concept, parts of reticence include *The Wicker Man*, *Ghost Of The Navigator*, *Brave New World* and *Cut Of The Silent Planet*. After all this time, Iron Maiden is still a hometown at heart. -GC 3.5/5/2



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# THE ELECTRIC HELLFIRE CLUB

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club are  
back!!

WITNESS THE  
MILLENNIUM

After completing tours with Type-O-Negative, Danzig and Gwar the long awaited fourth studio album by these Satanic masters is finally here! Produced by Abaddon of Venom, this is the Electric Hellfire Club's hardest effort to date and will thrill new and old fans alike! Look for them on tour in a city near you!



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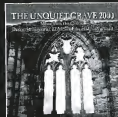
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## a perfect circle

### A PERFECT CIRCLE Mer de Noms VIRGIN RECORDS

Here's a tool of a different shape — A Perfect Circle. Maynard James Keenan's new band anticipates the inevitable comparisons: "We are not Tool!" Yeah, yeah, it's natural to wonder if they protest too much. With the ariety it's getting, Judith — for all intents a Tool song written and performed by a different line-up — is the cut you'll probably hear first. While it provides a nice transition for Tool fans to get into the new band, it's not representative. More layered, textured and subtle than anything recorded or performed by Keenan's other crew, *Mer de Noms* boasts more than its share of darkness and anger. Keenan's distinctive phrasing and his powerful, haunting voice dominate the soundscape. But he proves himself capable of much more than spitting out endless torrents of vitriol. Here, there are shades of darkness, the usual enigmatised histrionics interspersed with wistful acoustic passages, shifting tempos, warning and warning over you with total inescapability. With Tool, Keenan named aggression and passion creating a beautiful fury — Armageddon considered as fireworks. Here, the moon hangs in the night sky like a perfect circle, leaving you moonstruck, lurching. Throw Tool into the Sea of Tranquility and this is what you get — A Perfect Circle. —DLS 3.3.3.3.1/2



### OBTAINED ENSLAVEMENT The Shepherd and the Hounds of Hell

**NAPALM RECORDS AMERICA**  
Black metal, death metal — it's all the same to me: hyper fast beats, guitars shredded by speed, growls for vocals and the occasional lyric that's not blasphemous. Nope, despite the nuances, this is one musical subgenre that really doesn't dig words like "virtuosity" and "dynamics." With this in mind we come to *Obtained Enslavement*, a Nordic (where else?) black/death outfit with a leering devil on the cover. So far, pretty standard. But pop this sucker in and find — lo and behold! — actual melodies rising

out of the grind of instruments. I don't quite know how these guys did it (maybe but they included a clause that said "give us a sense of melody" in their bargain with Satan). Sure, everything else — from the dog-like barks that pass for vocals to the noisy purr of speed — is pretty much here, but I hear music. Maybe I wasn't supposed to, but I like it. —GC 3.3.3.3



### OLD MAN'S CHILD Revelation 666 CENTURY MEDIA

We'll give you three guesses what this band is all about — and the first two don't count. Adorning themselves in bloodied corpse paint, OMC bring maniacal theatrics to the black metal scene, and create one truly evil experience. While hyper-speed drumming and sharp guitar playing are present, these self-proclaimed "children of the devil" add haunting keyboards for an album heavy in atmosphere, bringing the band closer to a gothic sound, but not quite. Satanic masques spew forth as usual, but here the lyrics seem to reflect sentiments of bitterness and betrayal, rather than an outright condemnation of Christianity or, more predictably, the glorification of the Hooded One. Still, make no mistake, Old Man's Child are as unholy as they come and *Revelation 666* paints a malign portrait, even if it is all in good fun. —AL 3.3.3.3



### KATAKLYSM The Prophecy (Stigmata of the Immaculate) NUCLEAR BLAST

Kataklysm are one of Canada's most accomplished exports in the world of extreme metal, consistently dependable in dishing out the spoiled goods for the greater part of the last decade. The group fits rather nicely in both black and death categories, but will probably find a greater appreciation from the latter fan base due to lead bellower Maurizio Iacono's raspy growls. Kataklysm is probably the slowest you'll come to total chaos, song structures are convoluted to the point of being nonsensical, pulverizing beats and melodic leads are ground together in terrible portions of doom,

dread, and desperation. What separates this band from the rest of the riffistic fold is an interest in mythical themes, as evidenced in the songs *Somnium* and *Astral Empire*. The band is at its weakest when it strays into the politics of modern heavy music, like the warning cry on ??? "Question everything you know about the life." I try to not to look to metal bands for advice, but Kataklysm still offers enough death metal nihilism to satisfy the connoisseur of murder and mayhem. —AL 3.3.3.1/2



### FLESHCRAWL As Blood Rains From The Sky We Walk The Path Of Endless Fire METAL BLADE/ATTC

Fleshcrawl aren't as gory as their zombie artwork suggests, but that doesn't stop them from delivering the bloody goods. What makes up this latest album by one of Germany's finest death dealers is a dedication to intense, brutal death metal with a few evil atmospherics. While Fleshcrawl engage in a quite a

bit of Slayer-worship, they also pay tribute to Canada's Exciter, one the best metal acts to ever commit themselves to the dark side. There is nothing particularly progressive about this band, but when you've got the Dark Lord on your side, does it really matter? —AL 3.3.3.1/2



### COLD COLOURS Somnium XIII ROOT O' EVIL RECORDS

This band used to be called Wolfthorn and features members from Dwole, Carrier Flux and Glinto To Zalem. I remember Dwole being pretty freaky but I've never heard of any of the other projects. Whoever they are, they seem to mesh together an impressive selection of noise for their debut album. This assemblage is metal at the core, with elements of death metal, gothic, industrial and prog rock grating at the edges. Despite the heavy lyrics (agony, suicide, etc.) Cold Colours credit *Body the Savage* Slayer as their true inspiration. Take that as you will. —GC 3.3.3





RULES: Halloween as Guest, Xmas as OK, Everet Sacks

## THE WALKING DEAD

**PLAYABILITY:** HALLOWEEN  
**GRAPHICS:** XMAS  
**SHIVERS:** XMAS

One of the most successful role-playing system/universes out there is White Wolf's *World of Darkness*. It's a series of (mostly) modern day settings, where all of humanity's boogie-men exist, and players get to be the monsters. An exception to this rule is *Hunter: The Reckoning*. In this game, all the monsters exist, but the players are individuals who have been gifted with the ability to see through Evil's mask... and fight back.

In a lot of ways, this is likely the freakiest of the *World of Darkness* games: almost every thing else produced by White Wolf is an in-depth portrayal of werewolves, vampires, ghosts and how powerful and widespread they are. That's not so bad if you are playing a vampire, but when your character is only mortal, the stakes are higher. Especially when the players know how bad their enemies can get.

*The Walking Dead* is a supplement for the main game, and is intended to mainly add background and history to a campaign. It takes the form of an extended series of exchanges on a chat group on the 'net. This particular group is dedicated to those that hunt monsters, as a way of comparing information on their foes and each other. Handling the story as a series of postings means the train of thought jumps about quite a bit, but the writers do an effective job of both conveying the information, and setting the atmosphere. While there is a lot of useful info for the players, this supplement is most useful in establishing a "trust no one" feeling, as well as making it clear that — just because you've played vampires and ghosts already — you can't expect that what you know holds true on the other side.



**THE WALKING DEAD**  
White Wolf Publishing  
(Role-Playing Game)

While this isn't a stand-alone game, it is very entertaining, and reading it is a good way to kill a few evenings. If you play White Wolf's games, this supplement is worth picking up. If you don't, but have an interest in the paranormal (and if you are reading this, you must), it is still worth the purchase.

## NOSFERATU

**PLAYABILITY:** XMAS  
**GRAPHICS:** EASTER  
**SHIVERS:** XMAS

Another supplement for *Vampire*, this book concentrates on explaining the history of one clan of bloodsuckers: the Nosferatu. These aren't the sexy vampires all the socially maladjusted Goths and wannabe satanists wish they were, but nasty, filthy deformed monsters who leave in the sewers, and are quite happy to skulk there. The book explains their myths and history, as well as their motivations and agenda as a clan.

The most entertaining part of the book is the beginning — a sort of roundtable discussion where various Nosferatu go into depth on the topics near and dear to them. The rest of the book details their powers, lairs, how they are created, organized, and how to play these characters. While parts are worth reading, most of it is standard *Vampire* doctrine with the requisite angst intact.

The most annoying part of this book is the constant repetition of how horrible it is to be one of them, and how they are so noble in the way they work against their curse. It seems the purpose here is to give empathy and make you want to role-play them. Personally, if I was forced to play one of these, my first action would be to stay out for sunrise, and pick up a copy of *Hunter: The Reckoning*.

The rules section is mostly a listing of new and specific powers, and how to handle



**NOSFERATU**  
White Wolf Publishing  
(Role-Playing Game)

them in various versions of the game.

Not a really vital supplement to this series of games, and not a very interesting one. All in all, it's just boring and repetitive, with few exceptions.



**VAN RICHTEEN'S...**  
TSR/WOC  
(Role-Playing Game)

## VAN RICHTEEN'S MONSTER HUNTER'S COMPENDIUM

**PLAYABILITY:** XMAS  
**GRAPHICS:** XMAS  
**SHIVERS:** EASTER

*Ravenloft* is a campaign world set up for those who prefer a little *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* with their ores and elves. Basically this *AD&D* supplement is a bit darker and more stylish than their other worlds.

This series of supplements take the form of the collected researches of Richten, a student of the occult and dedicated monster hunter. In his book, he covers demons, devils, Gypsies, and witches.

Like all *AD&D* supplements, each type of monster has a section dedicated to it, containing background, fiction, and rules. The book is well laid out and written, while the artwork seems almost an after thought. Presumably, this was written by manufacturers too terrified of groups of parents accusing them of corrupting children.

Concepts like Hell and Satan are carefully ignored, and much of the book is spent trying to maintain the aspects of horror that these creatures should engender, without tying them to traditional beliefs. So devils and demons aren't fallen angels; they are merely powerful beings who have a different code of ethics and morals than humans. I feel that this sanitizing simply waters down what would otherwise be a worthwhile project, making the amount of work that went into it pointless. ☹

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## Nightmare At 20,000 Feet

Original Air Date: October 11, 1963 - USA

Starring William Shatner, Christine White and Nick Cravat

Written by Richard Matheson, based on his short story

Directed by Richard Donner

You unlock this door with the key of  
imagination. Beyond it is another dimension  
— a dimension of sound, a dimension of sight, a  
dimension of mind. You're moving into a land of  
both shadow and substance, of things and ideas.  
You've just crossed over into...

### The Twilight Zone

**T**o this day, *The Twilight Zone* is widely recognized as the greatest horror series ever — and one of the finest television programs ever to grace the small screen. One need only look to the success stories of the last decade — notably *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* — to see the looming shadow of *The Twilight Zone*'s creator, Rod Serling.

Perhaps the best known *Twilight Zone* episode was one of the final shows produced — Richard Matheson's *Nightmare At 20,000 Feet*. Later a featured (and regarded as the best) installment in *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983), the tale remains one of the series' most memorable.

Originally published in the anthology *Along By Night* (1961) and included in Matheson's own *Shock J* (1966), *Nightmare* is a classic tale of suspense, and it seemed almost predetermined that it was to be one of the most popular destinations in *The Twilight Zone*. Matheson's inspiration for the story came during an airplane flight, when he wondered what would happen if he saw a man standing on the wing.

Hired to direct the episode was a young Richard Donner (*Superman, The Omen*), and cast as a nervous passenger was an equally unknown William Shatner. Some three years before he was immortalized as Captain Kirk, Shatner portrayed Bob Wilson, a recovering mental patient tormented by what he sees on the wing of the plane in which he is flying; something not quite human... something deliberately sabotaging the engines. No sooner has he notified the staff on board, than the strange entity disappears, only to reappear later, making him the sole witness to possible disaster. To make matters worse, it appears that the strange creature has also taken a notice — and an interest — in him.



*TZ Terror: William Shatner confronts the thing at the window.*

Much like his performance as a charismatic bigot in Roger Corman's *The Intruder* (scripted by fellow TZ contributor Beaumont, see RM#11), Shatner's Wilson is multi-layered, the ideal linchpin for identification by the viewer. Throughout the early stages of his ordeal, he deliberately chokes back his screams, and that strain is seen etched in Shatner's body language; his face — his being — is perpetually suffused with terror. He is a man on the brink, trying desperately to retain his recently recovered "sanity;" a man torn between believing what his eyes show him, and what his mind knows cannot be true.

Having appeared in a previous Matheson-scripted *Twilight Zone* as another tormented traveler (the equally memorable Nick of Time), Shatner's tormented hero may be a sane man reacting to the impossible, or a man who is coming to the grim realization that he has not, in fact, been cured. Rather than side one way or the other, Matheson keeps his story oblique — it may indeed be a hallucination — saving the traditional *Twilight Zone* "sting" to answer the question in a pull back to the plane's damaged engine....

In the 35 years since *The Twilight Zone* ceased transmission, *Nightmare At 20,000 Feet* remains the defining TZ episode, mixing a combination of everyday drama with elements of the uncanny and the horrific. The popularity of this episode, and others like it — Rod Serling's *Time Enough At Last*, Charles Beaumont's *The Howling Man* and George Clayton Johnson's *Nothing In The Dark* — have in large part contributed to making the words "Twilight Zone" a part of popular consciousness.

—Brad Abraham

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